

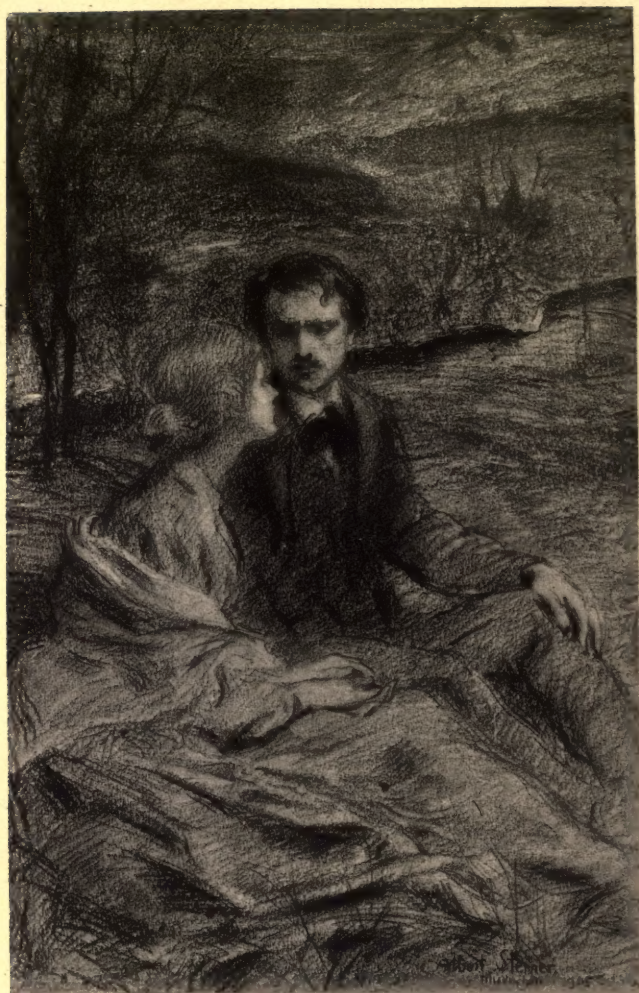


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FENWICK'S CAREER



FENWICK'S CAREER

BY
MRS. HUMPHRY WARD

ILLUSTRATED FROM DRAWINGS BY
ALBERT STERNER

IN TWO VOLUMES
VOL. I

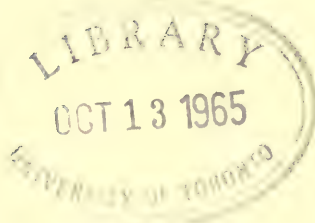


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Published May, 1906.

TO
MY DEAR SISTER
J. F. H.

MAY, 1906

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A Prefatory Word

THE story told in the present book owes something to the past, in its picturing of the present, as its predecessors have done; though in much less degree. The artist, as I hold, may gather from any field, so long as he sacredly respects what other artists have already made their own by the transmuting processes of the mind. To draw on the conceptions or the phrases that have once passed through the warm minting of another's brain, is, for us moderns, at any rate, the literary crime of crimes. But to the teller of stories, all that is recorded of the real life of men, as well as all that his own eyes can see, is offered for the enrichment of his tale. This is a clear and simple principle; yet it has been often denied. To insist upon it is, in my belief, to uphold the true flag of Imagination, and to defend the wide borders of Romance.

In addition to this word of notice, which my readers will perhaps accept from me once for all, this small preface must also contain a word of thanks to my friend Mr. Sterner, whose beautiful art has contributed to this story, as to several of its forerunners. I have to thank him, indeed, not only as an artist, but as a critic. In the interpreting of Fenwick, he has given me valuable aid; has corrected mistakes, and illumined his

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own painter's craft for me, as none but a painter can. But his poetic intelligence as an artist is what makes him so rare a colleague. In the first lovely drawing of the husband and wife sitting by the Westmoreland stream, Phoebe's face and look will be felt, I think, by any sympathetic reader, as a light on the course of the story; reappearing, now in storm, as in the picture of her despair, before the portrait of her supposed rival; and now in tremulous afterglow, as in the scene with which the drawings close. To be so understood and so bodied forth is great good-fortune; and I beg to be allowed this word of gratitude.

The lines quoted on page 163 are taken, as any lover of modern poetry will recognize, from the "Elegy on the Death of a Lady," by Mr. Robert Bridges, first printed in 1873.

MARY A. WARD.

PART I

Westmoreland

“Who can contemplate Fame through clouds unfold
The star which rises o’er her steep, nor climb?”

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I

"REALLY, mother, I can't sit any more. I'm that stiff!—and as cold as anything."

So said Miss Bella Morrison, as she rose from her seat with an affected yawn and stretch. In speaking she looked at her mother, and not at the painter to whom she had been sitting for nearly two hours. The young man in question stood embarrassed and silent, his palette on his thumb, brush and mahlstick suspended. His eyes were cast down: a flush had risen in his cheek. Miss Bella's manner was not sweet; she wished evidently to slight somebody, and the painter could not flatter himself that the somebody was Mrs. Morrison, the only other person in the room beside the artist and his subject.

The mother looked up slightly, and without pausing in her knitting—

"It's no wonder you're cold," she said, sharply, "when you wear such ridiculous dresses in this weather."

It was now the daughter's turn to flush; she colored and pouted. The artist, John Fenwick, returned dis-

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creetly to his canvas, and occupied himself with a fold of drapery.

"I put it on, because I thought Mr. Fenwick wanted something pretty to paint. And as he clearly don't see anything in *me!*"—she looked over her shoulder at the picture, with a shrug of mock humility concealing a very evident annoyance—"I thought anyway he might like my best frock."

"I'm sorry you're not satisfied, Miss Morrison," said the artist, stepping back from his canvas and somewhat defiantly regarding the picture upon it. Then he turned and looked at the girl—a coarsely pretty young woman, very airily clothed in a white muslin dress, of which the transparency displayed her neck and arms with a freedom not at all in keeping with the nipping air of Westmoreland in springtime—going up to his easel again after the look to put in another touch.

As to his expression of regret, Miss Morrison tossed her head.

"It doesn't matter to me!" she declared. "It was father's fad, and so I sat. He promised me, if I didn't like it, he'd put it in his own den, where *my* friends couldn't see it. So I really don't care a straw!"

"Bella! don't be rude!" said her mother, severely. She rose and came to look at the picture.

Bella's color took a still sharper accent; her chest rose and fell; she fidgeted an angry foot.

"I told Mr. Fenwick hundreds of times," she protested, "that he was making my upper lip miles too long—and that I *hadn't* got a nasty staring look like that—nor a mouth like that—nor—nor anything. It's—it's too bad!"

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The girl turned away, and Fenwick, glancing at her in dismay, saw that she was on the point of indignant tears.

Mrs. Morrison put on her spectacles. She was a small, gray-haired woman with a face, wrinkled and drawn, from which all smiles seemed to have long departed. Even in repose, her expression suggested hidden anxieties—fears grown habitual and watchful; and when she moved or spoke, it was with a cold caution or distrust, as though in all directions she was afraid of what she might touch, of possibilities she might set loose.

She looked at the picture, and then at her daughter.

"It's not flattered," she said, slowly. "But I can't say it isn't like you, Bella."

"Oh, I knew *you'd* say something like that, mother!" said the daughter, scornfully. She stooped and threw a shawl round her shoulders; gathered up some working materials and a book with which she had been toying during the sitting; and then straightened herself with an air at once tragic and absurd.

"Well, good-bye, Mr. Fenwick." She turned to the painter. "I'd rather not sit again, please."

"I shouldn't think of asking you, Miss Morrison," murmured the young man, moving aside to let her pass.

"Hullo, hullo! what's all this?" said a cheery voice at the door. "Bella, where are you off to? Is the sitting done?"

"It's been going on two hours, papa, so I should think I'd had about enough," said Miss Bella, making for the door.

But her father caught her by the arm.

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"I say, we *are* smart!—aren't we, mamma? Well, now then—let me have a look."

And drawing the unwilling girl once more towards the painter, he detained her while he scrutinized the picture.

"Do I squint, papa?" said Miss Morrison, with her head haughtily turned away.

"Wait a minute, my dear."

"*Have* I got the color of a bar-maid, and a waist like Fanny's?" Fanny was the Morrisons' housemaid, and was not slim.

"Be quiet, Bella; you disturb me."

Bella's chin mounted still higher; her foot once more beat the ground impatiently, while her father looked from the picture to her, and back again.

Then he released her with a laugh. "You may run away, child, if you want to. Upon my word, Fenwick, you're advancing! You are: no doubt about that. Some of the execution there is astonishing. But all the same I don't see you earning your bread and butter at portrait-painting; and I guess you don't either."

The speaker threw out a thin hand and patted Fenwick on the shoulder, returning immediately to a close examination of the picture.

"I told you, sir, I should only paint portraits if I were compelled!" said the young man, in a proud, muffled voice. He began to gather up his things and clean his palette.

"But of course you'll be compelled—unless you wish to die 'clemmed,' as we say in Lancashire," returned the other, briskly. "What do *you* say, mamma?"

He turned towards his wife, pushing up his spectacles

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to look at her. He was a tall man, a little bent at the shoulders from long years of desk work; and those who saw him for the first time were apt to be struck by a certain eager volatility of aspect—expressed by the small head on its thin neck, by the wavering blue eyes, and smiling mouth—not perhaps common in the chief cashiers of country banks.

As his wife met his appeal to her, the slight habitual furrow on her own brow deepened. She saw that her husband held a newspaper crushed in his right hand, and that his whole air was excited and restless. A miserable, familiar pang passed through her. As the chief and trusted official of an old-established bank in one of the smaller cotton-towns, Mr. Morrison had a large command of money. His wife had suspected him for years of using bank funds for the purposes of his own speculations. She had never dared to say a word to him on the subject, but she lived in terror—being a Calvinist by nature and training—of ruin here, and hell hereafter.

Of late, some instinct told her that he had been forcing the pace; and as she turned to him, she felt certain that he had just received some news which had given him great pleasure, and she felt certain also that it was news of which he ought rather to have been ashamed.

She drew herself together in a dumb recoil. Her hands trembled as she put down her knitting.

"I'd be sorry if a son of mine did nothing but paint portraits."

John Fenwick looked up startled.

"Why?" laughed her husband.

"Because it often seems to me," she said, in a thin,

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measured voice, "that a Christian might find a better use for his time than ministering to the vanity of silly girls, and wasting hours and hours on making a likeness of this poor body, that's of no real matter to anybody."

"You'd make short work of art and artists, my dear!" said Morrison, throwing up his hands. "You forget, perhaps, that St. Luke was a painter?"

"And where do you get that from, Mr. Morrison, I'd like to ask?" said his wife, slowly; "it's not in the Bible—though I believe you think it is. Well, good-night to you, Mr. Fenwick. I'm sorry you haven't enjoyed yourself, and I'm not going to deny that Bella was very rude and trying. Good-night."

And with a frigid touch of the hand, Mrs. Morrison departed. She looked again at her husband as she closed the door—a sombre, shrinking look.

Morrison avoided it. He was pacing up and down in high spirits. When he and Fenwick were left alone, he went up to the painter and laid an arm across his shoulders.

"Well!—how's the money holding out?"

"I've got scarcely any left," said the painter, instinctively moving away. It might have been seen that he felt himself dependent, and hated to feel it.

"Any more commissions?"

"I've painted a child up in Grasmere, and a farmer's wife just married. And Satterthwaite, the butcher, says he'll give me a commission soon. And there's a clergyman, up Easedale way, wants me to paint his son."

"Well; and what do you get for these things?"

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"Three pounds—sometimes five," said the young man, reluctantly.

"A little more than a photograph."

"Yes. They say if I won't be reasonable there's plenty as 'll take their pictures, and they can't throw away money."

"H'm! Well, at this rate, Fenwick, you're not exactly galloping into a fortune. And your father?"

Fenwick made a bitter gesture, as much as to say, "What's the good of discussing *that*?"

"H'm!—Well, now, Fenwick, what are your plans? Can you live on what you make?"

"No," said the other, abruptly. "I'm getting into debt."

"That's bad. But what's your own idea? You must have some notion of a way out."

"If I could get to London," said the other, in a low, dragging voice, "I'd soon find a way out."

"And what prevents you?"

"Well, it's simple enough. You don't really, sir, need to ask. I've no money—and I've a wife and child."

Fenwick's tone was marked by an evident ill-humor. He had thrown back his handsome head and his eyes sparkled. It was plain that Mr. Morrison's catechising manner had jarred upon a pride that was all on edge—wounded by poverty and ill-success.

"Yes—that was an imprudent match of yours, my young man! However—however—"

Mr. Morrison walked up and down ruminating. His long, thin hands were clasped before him. His head hung in meditation. And every now and then he

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looked towards the newspaper he had thrown down. At last he again approached the artist.

"Upon my word, Fenwick, I've a mind to do something for you—I have indeed. I believe you'd justify it—I do! And I've always had a soft heart for artists. You look at the things in this room—" He waved his hand towards the walls, which were covered with water-color drawings—"I've known most of the men who painted them, and I've assisted a very great many of them. Those pictures—most of them—represent loans, sir!—loans at times of difficulty, which I was *proud* to make"—Mr. Morrison struck his hand on the table—"yes, proud—because I believed in the genius of the men to whom I made them. I said, "I'll take a picture"—and they had the money—and the money saved their furniture—and their homes—and their wives and children. Well, I'm glad and proud to have done it, Fenwick!—you mark my words."

He paused, his eyes on the artist, his attitude grasping, as it were, at the other's approval—hungry for it. Fenwick said nothing. He stood in the shadow of a curtain, and the sarcasm his lip could not restrain escaped the notice of his companion. "And so, you see, I'm only following out an old custom when I say, I believe in you, Fenwick!—I believe in your abilities—I am sorry for your necessities—and I'll come to your assistance. Now, how much would take you to London and keep you there for six months, till you've made a few friends and done some work?"

"A hundred pounds," said the painter, breathing hard.

"A hundred pounds. And what about the wife?"

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"Her father very likely would give her shelter, and the child. And of course I should leave her provided."

"Well, and what about my security? How, John, in plain words, do you propose to repay me?"

Mr. Morrison spoke with extreme mildness. His blue eyes, whereof the whites were visible all round the pupils, shone benevolently on the artist—his mouth was all sensibility. Whereas, for a moment, there had been something of the hawk in his attitude and expression, he was now the dove—painfully obliged to pay a passing attention to business.

Fenwick hesitated.

"You mentioned six guineas, I think, for this portrait?" He nodded towards the canvas, on which he had been at work.

"I did. It is unfortunate, of course, that Bella dislikes it so. I sha'n't be able to hang it. Never mind. A bargain's a bargain."

The young man drew himself up proudly.

"It is so, Mr. Morrison. And you wished me to paint your portrait, I think, and Mrs. Morrison's." The elder man made a sign of assent. "Well, I could run up to your place—to Bartonbury—and paint those in the winter, when I come to see my wife. As to the rest—I'll repay you within the year—unless—well, unless I go utterly to grief, which of course I may."

"Wait here a moment. I'll fetch you the money. Better not promise to repay me in cash. It'll be a millstone round your neck. I'll take it in pictures."

"Very well; then I'll either paint you an original finished picture—historical or romantic subject—medium size, by the end of the year, or make you copies—you

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said you wanted two or three—one large or two small, from anything you like in the National Gallery.”

Morrison laughed good-temperedly. He touched a copy of *The Art Journal* lying on the table.

“There’s an article here about that German painter—Lenbach—whom they crack up so nowadays. When he was a young man, Baron Schack, it appears, paid him one hundred pounds a year, *for all his time*, as a copyist in Italy and Spain.” He spoke very delicately, mincing his words a little.

Fenwick’s color rose suddenly. Morrison was not looking at him, or he would have seen a pair of angry eyes.

“Prices have gone up,” said the painter, dryly. “And I guess living in London’s dearer now than living in Italy was when Lenbach (which he pronounced Lenback) was young!”

“Oh! so you know all about Lenbach?”

“You lent me the article. However”—Fenwick rose—“is that our bargain?”

The note in the voice was trenchant, even aggressive. Nothing of the suppliant, in tone or attitude. Morrison surveyed him, amused.

“If you like to call it so,” he said, lifting his delicate eyebrows a moment. “Well, I’ll take the risk.”

He left the room. Fenwick thrust his hands into his pockets, with a muttered exclamation, and walked to the window. He looked out upon a Westmoreland valley in the first flush of spring; but he saw nothing. His blood beat in heart and brain with a suffocating rapidity. So his chance was come! What would Phœbe say?

As he stood by the large window, face and form in

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strong relief against the crude green without, the energy of the May landscape was, as it were, repeated and expressed in the man beholding it. He was tall, a little round-shouldered, with a large, broad-browed head, covered with brown, straggling hair; eyes, glancing and darkish, full of force, of excitement even, curiously veiled, often, by suspicion; nose, a little crooked owing to an injury at football; and mouth, not coarse, but large and freely cut, and falling readily into lines of sarcasm.

The general look was one of great acuteness, rather antagonistic, as a rule, than sympathetic; and the hands, which were large and yet slender, were those of a craftsman finely endowed with all the instincts of touch.

Suddenly the young man turned on his heel and looked at the water-colors on the wall.

"The old hypocrite!" he thought; "they're worth hundreds—and I'll be bound he got them for nothing. He'll try to get mine for nothing; but he'll find I'm his match!"

For among these pictures were a number of drawings by men long since well known, and of steady repute among the dealers or in the auctions, especially of Birmingham and the northern towns. Morrison had been for years a bank clerk in Birmingham before his appointment to the post he now held. A group of Midland artists, whose work had become famous, and costly in proportion, had evidently been his friends at one time—or perhaps merely his debtors. They were at any rate well represented on the wall of this small Westmoreland house in which he spent his holidays.

Presently Mr. Morrison was heard returning. He

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placed an envelope in Fenwick's hand, and then, pointing him to a chair at the table, he dictated a form of I O U specifying that the debt was to be returned within a year, either in money or in the pictures agreed upon.

"Oh, no fine speeches, please, my boy—no fine speeches!" said Morrison, as the artist rose, stammering out his thanks. "That's been my nature all my life, I tell you—to help the lame dogs—ask anybody that knows me. That 'll do; that 'll do! Now then, what's going to be your line of action?"

Fenwick turned on him a face that vainly endeavored to hide the joy of its owner.

"I shall look out, of course, first of all, for some bread-and-butter work. I shall go to the editors of the illustrated papers and show them some things. I shall attend some life-school in the evenings. And the rest of the time I shall paint—paint like Old Harry!"

The words caused a momentary wrinkling of Mr. Morrison's brow.

"I should avoid those expressions, if I were you, Fenwick. But paint what, my dear boy?—paint what?"

"Of course I have my ideas," said Fenwick, staring at the floor.

"I think I have earned a right to hear them."

"Certainly. I propose to combine the color and romance of the Pre-Raphaelites, with the truth and drawing of the French school," said the young man, suddenly looking up.

Surprise betrayed his companion into a broad grin.

"Upon my word, Fenwick, you won't fail for lack of ambition!"

The young man reddened, then quietly nodded.

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"No one gets on without ambition. My ideas have been pretty clear for a long time. The English Romantic school have no more future, unless they absorb French drawing and French technique. When they have done that, they will do the finest work in the world."

Morrison's astonishment increased. The decision and self-confidence with which Fenwick spoke had never yet shown themselves so plainly in the harassed and humbly born painter of Miss Bella's portrait.

"And you intend to do the finest work in the world?" said the patron, in a voice of banter.

Fenwick hesitated.

"I shall do good work," he said, doggedly, after a pause. Then, suddenly raising his head, he added, "And if I weren't sure of it, I'd never let you lend me money."

Morrison laughed.

"That's all right.—And now, what will Mrs. Fenwick say to us?"

Fenwick turned away. He repossessed himself of the envelope, and buttoned his coat over it, before he replied.

"I shall, of course, consult her immediately. What shall I do with this picture?" He pointed to the portrait on the easel.

"Take it home with you, and see if you can't beautify it a little," said Morrison, in a tone of good-humor. "You've got a lot of worldly wisdom to learn yet, my dear Fenwick. The women *must* be flattered."

Fenwick repeated that he was sorry if Miss Bella was disappointed, but the tone was no less perfunctory than before. After stooping and looking sharply for a mo-

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ment into the picture—which was a strong, ugly thing, with some passages of remarkable technique—he put it aside, saying that he would send for it in the evening. Then, having packed up and shouldered the rest of his painter's gear, he stood ready to depart.

"I'm awfully obliged to you!" he said, holding out his hand.

Morrison looked at the handsome young fellow, the vivacity of the eyes, the slight agitation of the lip.

"Don't mention it," he said, with redoubled urbanity. "It's my way—only my way! When 'll you be off?"

"Probably next week. I'll come and say good-bye."

"I *must* have a year! But Phoebe will take it hard."

John Fenwick had paused on his way home, and was leaning over a gate beside a stream, now thinking anxiously of his domestic affairs, and now steeped in waves of delight—vague, sensuous, thrilling—that flowed from the colors and forms around him. He found himself in an intricate and lovely valley, through which lay his path to Langdale. On either side of the stream, wooded or craggy fells, gashed with stone-quarries, accompanied the windings of the water, now leaving room for a scanty field or two, and now hemming in the river with close-piled rock and tree. Before him rose a white Westmoreland farm, with its gabled porch and moss-grown roof, its traditional yews and sycamores; while to his left, and above the farm, hung a mountain-face, dark with rock, and purple under the evening shadows—a rich and noble shape, lost above in dim heights of cloud, and, below, cleft to the heart by one deep ghyll, whence the golden trees—in the glittering green of May—descended single

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or in groups, from shelf to shelf, till their separate brilliance was lost in the dense wood which girdled the white farm-house.

The pleasure of which he was conscious in the purple of the mountain, the color of the trees, and all that magic of light and shade which filled the valley—a pleasure involuntary, physical, automatic, depending on certain delicacies of nerve and brain—rose and persisted, while yet his mind was full of harassing and disagreeable thoughts.

Well, Phoebe might take her choice!—for they had come to the parting of the ways. Either a good painter, a man on the level of the best, trained and equipped as they, or something altogether different—a foreman, a clerk, perhaps, in his uncle's upholstery business at Darlington, a ticket-collector on the line—anything! He could always earn his own living and Phoebe's. There was no fear of that. But if he was finally to be an artist, he would be a first-rate one. Let him only get more training; give him time and opportunity; and he would be as good as any one.

Morrison, plainly, had thought him a conceited ass. Well, let him!

What chance had he ever had of proving what was in him? As he hung over the gate smoking, he thought of his father and mother, and of his childhood in the little Kendal shop—the bookseller's-shop which had been the source and means of his truest education.

Not that he had been a neglected child. Far from it. He remembered his gentle mother, troubled by his incessant drawing, by his growing determination to be an artist, by the constant effort as he grew to boyhood to

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keep the peace between him and his irritable old father. He remembered her death—and those pictorial effects in the white-sheeted room—effects of light and shadow—of flowers—of the gray head uplifted; he remembered also trying to realize them, stealthily, at night, in his own room, with chalk and paper—and then his passion with himself, and the torn drawing, and the tears, which, as it were, another self saw and approved.

Then came school-days. His father had sent him to an old endowed school at Penrith, that he might be away from home and under discipline. There he had received a plain commercial education, together with some Latin and Greek. His quick, restless mind had soaked it all in; nothing had been a trouble to him; though, as he well knew, he had done nothing supremely well. But Homer and Virgil had been unlocked for him; and in the school library he found Shakespeare and Chaucer, *Morte d'Arthur*, and *Don Quixote*, fresh and endless material for his drawing, which never stopped. Drawing everywhere—on his books and slates, on doors and gate-posts, or on the whitewashed wall of the old Tudor school-room, where a hunt, drawn with a burned stick, and gloriously dominating the whole room, had provoked the indulgence, even the praise, of the head-master.

And the old drawing-master!—a German—half blind, though he would never confess it—who dabbled in oil-painting, and let the boy watch his methods. How he would twirl his dirty brush round and dab down a lump of Prussian blue, imagining it to be sepia, hastily correcting it a moment afterwards with a lump of lake, and then say chuckling to himself: “By Gode, dat is fine!—

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dat is very nearly a good purple. Fenwick, my boy, mark me—you vill not find a good purple no-verel! Some-verel—in de depths of Japanese art—dere is a good purple. Dat I believe. But not in Europe. Ve Europeans are all tam fools. But I vill not svear!—no!—you onderstand, Fenwick; you haf never heard me svear?” And then a round oath, smothered in a hasty fit of coughing. And once he had cut off part of the skirt of his Sunday coat, taking it in his blindness for an old one, to clean his palette with; and it was thought, by the boys, that it was the unseemly result of this rash act, as disclosed at church the following Sunday morning, which had led to the poor old man's dismissal.

But from him John had learned a good deal about oil-painting—something too of anatomy—though more of this last from that old book—Albinus, was it?—that he had found in his father's stock. He could see himself lying on the floor—poring over the old plates, morning, noon, and night—then using a little lad, his father's apprentice, to examine him in what he had learned—the two going about arm-in-arm—Backhouse asking the questions according to a paper drawn up by John—“How many heads to the deltoid?”—and so on—over and over again—and with what an eagerness, what an ardor!—till the brain was bursting and the hand quivering with new knowledge—and the power to use it. Then Leonardo's *Art of Painting* and Reynolds's *Discourses*—both discovered in the shop, and studied incessantly, till the boy of eighteen felt himself the peer of any Academician, and walked proudly down the Kendal streets, thinking of the half-finished paintings in his garret at home, and of the dreams, the conceptions, the

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ambitions of which that garret had already been the scene.

After that—some evil days! Quarrels with his father, refusals to be bound to the trade, to accept the shop as his whole future and inheritance—painful scenes with the old man, and with the customers who complained of the son's rudeness and inattention—attempts of relations to mediate between the two, and all the time his own burning belief in himself and passion to be free. And at last a time of truce, of conditions made and accepted—the opening of the new Art School—evenings of delightful study there—and, suddenly, out of the mists, Phœbe's brown eyes, and Phœbe's soft encouragement!

Yes, it was Phœbe, Phœbe herself who had determined his career; let her consider that, when he asked for sacrifices! But for the balm she had poured upon his sore ambitions—but for those long walks and talks, in which she had been to him first the mere recipient of his dreams and egotisms, and then—since she had the loveliest eyes, and a young wild charm—a creature to be hotly wooed and desired, he might never have found courage enough to seize upon his fate.

For her sake indeed he had dared it all. She had consoled and inspired him; but she had made the breach with his father final. When they met she was only a struggling teacher in Miss Mason's school, the daughter of a small farmer in the Vale of Keswick. Old Fenwick looked much higher for his son. So there was renewed battle at home, till at last a couple of portrait commissions from a big house near Kendal clinched the matter. A hurried marriage had been followed by the usual parental thunders. And now they had five years to

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look back upon, years of love and struggle and discontent. By turning his hand to many things, Fenwick had just managed to keep the wolf from the door. He had worked hard, but without much success; and what had been an ordinary good opinion of himself had stiffened into a bitter self-assertion. He knew very well that he was regarded as a conceited, quarrelsome fellow, and rather gloried in it. The world, he considered, had so far treated him ill; he would at any rate keep his individuality.

Phœbe, too, once so sweet, so docile, so receptive, had begun to be critical, to resist him now and then. He knew that in some ways he had disappointed her; and there was gall in the thought. As to the London plan, his word would no longer be enough. He would have to wrestle with and overcome her.

London!—the word chimed him from the past—threw wide the future. He moved on along the rough road, possessed by dreams. He had a vision of his first large picture; himself rubbing in the figures, life-size, or at work on the endless studies for every part—fellow-students coming to look, Academicians, buyers; he heard himself haranguing, plunging headlong into ideas and theories, holding his own with the best of “the London chaps.” Between whiles, of course, there would be hack-work—illustration—portraits—anything to keep the pot boiling. And always, at the end of this vista, there was success—success great and tangible.

He was amused by his own self-confidence, and laughed as he walked. But his mood never wavered.

He *had* the power—the gift. Nobody ever doubted that who saw him draw. And he had, besides, what so

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many men of his own class made shipwreck for want of—he had *imagination*—enough to show him what it is that makes the mere craftsman into the artist, enough to make him hunger night and day for knowledge, travel, experience. Thanks to his father's shop, he had read a great deal already; and with a little money, how he would buy books, how he would read them!—

And at the thought, fresh images, now in rushing troops, and now in solitary fantastic beauty, began to throng before the inward eye, along the rich background of the valley; images from poetry and legend, stored deep in the greedy fancy, a retentive mind. They came from all sources—Greek, Arthurian, modern; Hephæstus, the lame god and divine craftsman, receiving Thetis in his workshop of the skies, the golden automata wrought by his own hands supporting him on either side; the maidens of Achilles washing the dead and gory body of Hector in the dark background of the hut, while in front swift-foot Achilles holds old Priam in talk till the sad offices are over, and the father may be permitted to behold his son; Arthur and Sir Bedivere beside the lake; Crusaders riding to battle—the gleam of their harness—the arched necks of their steeds—the glory of their banners—the shade and sunlight of the deep vales through which they pass; the Lady of Shalott as the curse comes upon her—Ænone—Brunhilda—Atalanta. Swift along the May woods the figures fled, vision succeeding vision, beauty treading on beauty. It became hallucination—a wildness—an ecstasy. Fenwick stood still, gave himself up to the possession—let it hold him—felt the strangeness and the peril of it—then, suddenly, wrenched himself free.

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Running down to the edge of the river, he began to pick up stones and threw them violently into the stream. It was a remedy he had long learned to use. The physical action released the brain from the tyranny of the forms which held it. Gradually they passed away. He began to breathe more quietly, and, sitting down by the water, his head in his hands, he gave himself up to a quieter pleasure in the nature round him, and in the strength of his own faculty.

To something else also. For while he was sitting there, he found himself *praying* ardently for success—that he might do well in London, might make a name for himself, and leave his mark on English art. This was to him a very natural outlet of emotion; he was not sure what he meant by it precisely; but it calmed him.

II

MEANWHILE Phoebe Fenwick was watching for her husband.

She had come out upon the green strip of ground in front of Green Nab cottage, and was looking anxiously along the portion of high-road which was visible from where she stood.

The small, whitewashed house—on this May day, more than a generation ago—stood on a narrow shelf that juts out from the face of one of the eastern fells, bounding the valley of Great Langdale.

When Phoebe, seeing no one on the road, turned to look how near the sun might be to its setting, she saw it, as Wordsworth saw it of old, dropping between the peaks of those “twin brethren,” which to the northwest close in the green bareness of the vale. Between the two pikes the blaze lingered, enthroned; the far winding of the valley, hemmed in also by blue and craggy fells, was pierced by rays of sunset; on the broad side of the pikes the stream of Dungeon Ghyll shone full-fed and white; the sheep, with their new-born lambs beside them, studded the green pastures of the valley; and sounds of water came from the fell-sides. Everywhere lines of broad and flowing harmony, moulded by some subtle union of rock and climate and immemorial age into a mountain beauty which is the peculiar possession

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of Westmoreland and Cumberland. Neither awful, nor yet trivial; neither too soft for dignity, nor too rugged for delight. The Westmoreland hills are the remains of an infinitely older world—giants decayed, but of a great race and ancestry; they have the finish, the delicate or noble loveliness—one might almost say the *manner*—that comes of long and gentle companionship with those chief forces that make for natural beauty, with air and water, with temperate suns and too abundant rains. Beside them the Alps are inhuman; the Apennines mere forest-grown heaps—mountains in the making; while all that Scotland gains from the easy enveloping glory of its heather, Westmoreland, which is almost heatherless, must owe to an infinitude of fine strokes, tints, curves, and groupings, to touches of magic and to lines of grace, yet never losing the wild energy of precipice and rock that belongs of right to a mountain world.

To-day Langdale was in spring. The withered fern was still red on the sides of the pikes; there was not a leaf on the oaks, still less on the ashes; but the larches were green in various plantations, and the sycamores were bursting. Half a mile eastward the woods were all in soft bloom, carpeted with wind-flowers and bluebells. Here, but for the larches, and the few sycamores and yews that guard each lonely farm, all was naked fell and pasture. The harsh spring wind came rioting up the valley, to fling itself on the broad sides of the pikes; the lambs made a sad bleating; the water murmured in the ghyll beyond the house; the very sunshine was clear and cold.

Calculations quick and anxious passed through the young wife's brain. Debts here, and debts there; the

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scanty list of small commissions ahead, which she knew by heart; the uncertainty of the year before them; clothes urgently wanted for the child, for John, for herself. She drew a long and harassed breath.

Phoebe Fenwick was a tall, slender creature, very young; with a little golden head on a thin neck, features childishly cut, and eyes that made the chief adornment of a simple face. The lines of the brow, the lids and lashes, and the clear brown eye itself were indeed of a most subtle and distinguished beauty; they accounted, perhaps, for the attention with which most persons of taste and cultivation observed Fenwick's wife. For the eyes seemed to promise a character, a career; whereas the rest of the face was no more, perhaps, than a piece of agreeable pink and white.

She wore a dress of dark-blue cotton, showing the spring of her beautiful throat. The plain gown with its long folds, the uncovered throat, and rich simplicity of her fair hair had often reminded Fenwick and a few of his patrons of those Florentine photographs which now, since the spread of the later Pre-Raphaelites and the opening of the Grosvenor Gallery, were to be seen even in the shops of country towns. There was a literary gentleman in Kendal who said that Mrs. Fenwick was like one of Ghirlandajo's tall women in Santa Maria Novella. Phoebe had sometimes listened uncomfortably to these comparisons. She was a Cumberland girl, and had no wish at all to be like people in Italy. It seemed somehow to cut her off from her own folk.

"John is late!" said a voice beside her.

An elderly woman had stepped out of the cottage

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porch. Miss Anna Mason, the head-mistress of an endowed girls' school in Hawkshead, had come to spend a Saturday afternoon with her old pupil, Phoebe Fenwick. A masterful-looking woman—ample in figure, with a mouth of decision. She wore a gray alpaca dress, adorned with a large tatted collar, made by herself, and fastened by a brooch containing a true-lover's knot in brown hair.

"He'll have stayed on to finish," said Phoebe, looking round. "Where's Carrie?"

Miss Mason replied that the child wouldn't wait any longer for her supper, and that Daisy, the little servant, was feeding her. Then, slipping her arm inside Mrs. Fenwick's, Miss Mason looked at the sunset.

"It's a sweet little cottage," she said, shading her eyes from the fast-sinking orb, and then turning them on the tiny house—"but I dare say you'll not be here long, Phoebe."

Mrs. Fenwick started.

"John told Mr. Harrock he'd pay him rent for it till next Easter."

Miss Mason laughed.

"Are you going to let John go wasting his time here till next Easter?"

The arm she held moved involuntarily.

"He has several commissions—people not far from here," said Mrs. Fenwick, hurriedly. "And if the weather's too bad, we can always go to rooms in Kendal or Ambleside."

"Well, if that's what you're thinking of, my dear, you'd better make a clerk of him at once and have done

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with it! He told me his uncle would always find him work in the upholstery business."

Phoebe's soft cheeks trembled a little.

"Some day we'll have saved some money," she said, in a low voice—"and then we'll go to London; and—and John will get on."

"Yes—when you stop holding him back, Mrs. Phoebe Fenwick!"

"Oh! Miss Anna, I don't hold him back!" cried the wife, suddenly, impetuously.

Miss Mason shook an incredulous head.

"I haven't heard a single word of his bettering himself—of his doing anything but muddle on here—having a 'crack' with this farmer and that—and painting pictures he's a sight too good for, since I came this morning; and we've talked for hours. No—I may as well have it out—I'm a one for plain speaking; I'm a bit disappointed in you both. As for you, Phoebe, you'll be precious sorry for it some day if you don't drive him out of this."

"Where should I drive him to?" cried Mrs. Fenwick, stifled. She had broken a sycamore twig, and was stripping it violently of its buds.

Miss Anna looked at her unmoved. The gray-haired school-mistress was a woman of ideas and ambitions beyond her apparent scope in life. She had read her Carlyle and Ruskin, and in her calling she was an enthusiast. But, in the words of the Elizabethan poet, she was perhaps "unacquainted still with her own soul." She imagined herself a Radical; she was in truth a tyrant. She preached Ruskin and the simple life; no worldling ever believed more fiercely in the gospel of success. But, let it be said promptly, it was success for others,

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rarely or never for herself; she despised the friend who could not breast and conquer circumstance; as for her own case there were matters much more interesting to think of. But she was the gadfly, the spur of all to whom she gave her affection. Phoebe, first her pupil, then her under-mistress, and moulded still by the old habit of subordination to her, both loved and dreaded her. It was said that she had made the match between her *protégée* and old Fenwick's rebellious and gifted son. She had certainly encouraged it, and, whether from conscience or invincible habit, she had meddled a good deal with it ever since.

In reply to Phoebe's question, Miss Anna merely inquired whether Mrs. Fenwick supposed that George Romney—the Westmoreland artist—would have had much chance with his art if he had stayed on in Westmoreland? Why, the other day a picture by Romney had been sold for three thousand pounds! And pray, would he ever have become a great painter at all if he had stuck to Kendal or Dalton-in-Furness all his life?—if he had never been brought in contact with the influences, the money, and the sitters of London? Those were the questions that Phoebe had to answer. “Would the beautiful Lady This and Lady That ever have come to Kendal to be painted?—would he ever have seen Lady Hamilton?”

At this Mrs. Fenwick flushed hotly from brow to chin.

“I rather wonder at you, Miss Anna!” she said, breathing fast; “you think it was all right he should desert his wife for thirty years—so—so long as he painted pictures of that bad woman, Lady Hamilton, for you to look at!”

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Miss Anna looked curiously at her companion. The school-mistress was puzzled—and provoked.

"Well!—you don't suppose that John's going to desert you for thirty years!" said the other, with an impatient laugh. "Don't be absurd, Phoebe."

Phoebe said nothing. She heard a cry from the baby Carrie, and she hurried across the little garden to the house. At the same moment there was a shout of greeting from below, and Fenwick came into sight on the steep pitch of lane that led from the high road to the cottage. Miss Anna strolled down to meet him.

In the eyes of his old friend, John Fenwick made a very handsome figure as he approached her, his painter's wallet slung over his shoulder. That something remarkable had happened to him she divined at once. In moments of excitement a certain foreign look—as some people thought, a *gypsyish* look—was apt to show itself. The roving eyes, the wild manner, the dancing step betrayed the inmost man—banishing altogether the furtive or jealous reserve of the north-countryman, which were at other times equally to be noticed. Miss Anna had often wondered how the same man could be so shy—and so vain!

However, though elation of some sort was uppermost, he was not at first inclined to reveal himself. He told Miss Anna as they walked up together that he had done with Miss Bella; that old Morrison praised the portrait, and the girl hated it; that she was a vulgar, conceited creature, and he was thankful to have finished.

"If I were to show it at Manchester next month, you'd see what the papers would say. But I suppose

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Miss Bella would sooner die than let her father send it. Silly goose! Powdering every time—and sucking her lips to make them red—and twisting her neck about—ugh! I've no patience with women like that! When I get on a bit, I'll paint nobody I don't want to paint."

"All right—but get on first," said Miss Anna, patting him on the arm. "What next, John—what next?"

He hesitated. His look grew for a moment veiled and furtive. "Oh, there's plenty to do," he said, evasively.

They paused on the green ledges outside the cottage.

"What—portraits?"

He nodded uncertainly.

"You'll not grow fat on Great Langdale," said Miss Anna, waving an ironical hand towards the green desolation of the valley.

He looked at her, walked up and down a moment, then said with an outburst, though in a low tone, and with a look over his shoulder at the open window of the cottage, "Morrison's lent me a hundred pounds. He advises me to go to London at once."

Miss Anna raised her eyebrows. "Oh—oh!" she said—"that's news! What do you mean by 'at once'?—September?"

"Next week—I won't lose a day."

Miss Anna pondered.

"Well, I dare say Phœbe can hurry up."

"Oh! I can't take Phœbe," he said, in a hasty, rather injured voice.

"Not take Phœbe!" cried the other under her breath, seeming to hear around her the ghosts of words which had but just passed between her and Phœbe—"and what on earth are you going to do with her?"

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He led her away towards the edge of the little garden—arguing, prophesying, laying down the law. While he was thus engaged came Phœbe's silver voice from the parlor:

"Is that you, John? Supper's ready."

He and Miss Anna turned.

"Hush, please!" said Fenwick to his companion, finger on lip; and they entered.

"You'll have got the money from Mr. Morrison, John?" said Phœbe, presently, when they were settled to their meal.

"Ay," said Fenwick, "that's all right. Phœbe, that's a real pretty dress of yours."

Soft color rose in the wife's cheeks.

"I'm glad you like it," said Phœbe, soberly. Then looking up—

"John—don't give Carrie that!—it 'll make her sick."

For Fenwick was stealthily feeding the baby beside him with morsels from his own plate. The child's face—pink mouth and blue eyes, both wide open—hung upon him in a fixed expectancy.

"She does like it so—the little greedy puss! It won't do her any harm."

But the mother persisted. Then the child cried, and the father and mother wrangled over it, till Fenwick caught up the babe by Phœbe's peremptory directions and carried it away up-stairs. At the door of the little parlor, while Phœbe was at his shoulder, wiping away the child's tears and cooing to it, Fenwick suddenly turned his head and kissed his wife's cheek, or rather her pretty ear, which presented itself. Miss Anna, still at

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table, laughed discreetly behind their backs—the laugh of the sweet-natured old maid.

When the child was asleep up-stairs, Phoebe and the little servant cleared away while Fenwick and Miss Anna read the newspaper, and talked on generalities. In this talk Phoebe had no share, and it might have been noticed by one who knew them well, that in his conversation with Miss Mason, Fenwick became another man. He used tones and phrases that he either had never used, or used no longer, with Phoebe. He showed himself, in fact, intellectually at ease, expansive, and, at times, amazingly arrogant. For instance, in discussing a paragraph about the Academy in the London letter of the *Westmoreland Gazette*, he fired up and paced the room, haranguing his listener in a loud, eager voice. Of course she knew—every one knew—that all the best men and all the coming forces were now *outside the Academy*. Millais, Leighton, Watts—spent talents, extinct volcanoes!—Tadema a marvellous mechanic, without ideas:—the landscape men, chaotic, no standard anywhere, no style. On the other hand, Burne-Jones and the Grosvenor Gallery group—ideas without drawing, without knowledge, feet and hands absurd, muscles anyhow. While as for Whistler and the Impressionists—a lot of maniacs, running a fad to death—but *clever*—by Jove!—

No!—there was a new art coming!—the creation of men who had learned to draw, and could yet keep a hold on ideas—

“*Character!*—that’s what we want!” He struck the table; and finally with a leap he was at the goal which Miss Anna—sitting before him, arms folded, her strong

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old face touched with satire—had long foreseen. "By George, *I'd* show them!—if I only had the chance."

He threw the pictures back into the cupboard.

"No doubt," said Miss Anna, dryly. "I think you *are* a great man, John, though you say it. But you've got to prove it."

He laughed uncomfortably.

"I've written a good many of these things to the *Gazette*, he said, evading her direct attack. "They'll put them in next week."

"I wish you hadn't, John!" said Phœbe, anxiously. She was sitting under the lamp with her needle-work.

He turned upon her aggressively.

"And why, please?"

"Because the last article you wrote lost you a commission. Don't you remember—that gentleman at Grasmere—what he said?"

She nodded her fair head gravely. It struck Miss Anna that she was looking pale and depressed.

"Old fool!" said Fenwick. "Yes, I remember. He wouldn't ask anybody to paint his children, who'd written such a violent article. As if I wanted to paint his children! Besides, it was a mere excuse—to save the money."

"I don't think so," murmured Phœbe. "And oh, I had counted on that five pounds!"

"What does five pounds matter, compared to speaking one's mind?" said Fenwick, roughly.

There was a silence. Fenwick, looking at the two women, felt them unsympathetic, and abruptly changed the subject.

"I wish you'd give us some music, Phœbe."

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Phœbe rose obediently. He opened the little pianette for her, and lit the candles.

She played some Irish and Scotch airs, in poor settings, and with much stumbling. After a little, Fenwick listened restlessly, his brow frowning, his fingers drumming on the arm of his chair. They were all glad when it was over.

Phœbe, hearing a whimper from the child, went upstairs. The two others were soon in hushed but earnest conversation.

Miss Anna had gone to bed. Fenwick was sitting with a book before him—lost in anxious and exciting calculations—when Phœbe entered the room.

"Is that you?" he said, jumping up. "That's all right. I wanted to talk to you."

"I thought you did," she said, with a very quiet, drooping air; then going to the window, which was open, she leaned out into the May night. "Where shall we go? It's warmer."

"Let's go to the ghyll," said Fenwick; "I'll fetch you a shawl."

For, as both remembered, Miss Anna was up-stairs, and in that tiny cottage all sounds were audible.

Fenwick wrapped a shawl round his companion, and they sallied forth.

The valley lay below them. A young moon was near its setting over the farthest pike, and the fine lines of the mountain rose dimly clear, from its base on the valley floor to the dark cliffs of Pavey Ark. Not a light was visible anywhere. Their little cottage on its shelf, with the rays of its small lamp shining through the win-

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dow, seemed to be the only spectator of the fells; it talked with them in a lonely companionship.

They passed through the fence of the small garden out on to the fell-side. Dim forms of sheep rose in alarm as they came near, and bleating lambs hurried beside them. Soft sounds of wind, rising and falling along the mountain or stirring amid last year's bracken, pursued them, till they reached the edge of the ghyll, and, descending its side, found the water murmuring among the stones, the only audible thing in a deep shade and silence.

They sat down by the stream, and Fenwick, taking up some pebbles, began to drop them nervously into the water. Phœbe, beside him, clasped her hands round her knees; in a full light it would have been seen that the hands were trembling.

"Phœbe—old Morrison's offered to lend me some money."

Phœbe started.

"I—I thought perhaps he had."

"And he wants me to go to London at once."

"You've *got* the money?"

"In my pocket"—he laid his hand upon it. Then he laughed: "He didn't pay me for the portrait, though. That's like him. And of course I couldn't ask for it."

A silence.

Fenwick turned round and took one of her hands.

"Well, little woman, what do you think? Are you going to let me go and make my fortune?—our fortune?"

"As if I could stop you!" she said, hoarsely. "It's what you've wanted for months."

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"Well, and if I have, where's the harm? We can't go on living like this!"

And he began to talk, with great rapidity, about the absurdity of attempting to make a living as an artist out of Westmoreland—out of any place, indeed, but London, the natural centre and clearing-house of talent.

"I could make a living out of teaching, I suppose, up here. I could get—in time—a good many lessons going round to schools. But that would be a dog's life. You wouldn't want to see me at that forever, would you, Phœbe? Or at painting portraits at five guineas apiece? I could chuck it all, of course, and go in for business. But I can tell you, England would lose something if I did."

And, catching up another stone, he threw it into the beck with a passion which made the clash of it, as it struck upon a rock, echo through the ghyll. There was something magnificent in the gesture, and a movement, half thrill, half shudder, ran through the wife's delicate frame. She clasped her hands round his arm, and drew close to him.

"John!—are you going to leave baby and me behind?"

Her voice, as she pressed towards him, her face up-raised to his, rose from deep founts of feeling; but she kept the sob in it restrained. Fenwick felt the warmth and softness of her young body; the fresh face, the fragrant hair were close upon his lips. He threw both his arms round her and folded her to him.

"Just for a little while," he pleaded—"till I get my footing. One year! For both our sakes—Phœbe!"

"I could live on such a little—we could get two rooms, which would be cheaper for you than lodgings."

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"It isn't that!" he said, impatiently, but kissing her. "It is that I must be my own master—I must have nothing to think of but my art—I must slave night and day—I must live with artists—I must get to know all sorts of people who might help me on. If you and Carrie came up—just at first—I couldn't do the best for myself—I couldn't, I tell you. And of course I mean the best for *you*, in the long run. If I go, I must succeed. And if I can give all my mind, I *shall* succeed. Don't you think I shall?"

He drew away from her abruptly—holding her at arm's-length, scrutinizing her face almost with hostility.

"Yes," said Phoebe, slowly, "Yes, of course you'll succeed—if you don't quarrel with people."

"Quarrel," he repeated, angrily. "You're always harping on that—you're always so *afraid* of people. It does a man no harm, I tell you, to be a bit quick-tempered. I sha'n't be a fool."

"No, but—I could warn you often. And then you know," she said, slowly, caressing his shoulder with her hand—"I could look after money. You're dreadfully bad about money, John. Directly you've got it, you spend it—and sometimes when you borrow you forget all about paying it back."

He was struck dumb for a moment with astonishment; feeling at the same time the trembling of the form which his arm still encircled.

"Well, Phoebe," he said, at last, "you seem determined to say disagreeable things to me to-night. I suppose I might remind you that you're much younger than I; and that of course a man knows much more about business than a young thing like you can. How, I

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should like to know, could we have done any better than we have done, since we married? As far as money goes, we've had a hell of a time, from first to last!"

"It would have been much worse," said Phœbe, softly, "if I hadn't been there—you know it would. You know last year when we were in such straits, and all our things were nearly sold up, you let me take over things, and keep the money. And I went to see all the people we owed money to—and—and it's pretty bad—but it isn't as bad as it was"—

She hid her face on her knees, choked by the sob she could no longer repress.

"Well, of course it's better," said Fenwick, ungraciously; "I don't say you haven't got a head, Phœbe—why, I know you have! You did first rate! But, after all, I had to earn the money."

She looked up eagerly. "That's what I say. You'd never be able to think about little things—you'd have to be painting always—and going about—and—"

He bit his lip.

"Why, I could manage for myself—for a bit," he said, with a laugh. "I'm not such an idiot as all that Old Morrison's lent me a hundred pounds, Phœbe!"

He enjoyed her amazement.

"A hundred pounds!" she repeated, faintly. "And however are we going to repay all that?"

He drew her back to him triumphantly. "Why, you silly child, I am going to earn it, of course—and a deal more. Don't you hinder me, Phœbe! and I shall be a rich man before we can look round, and you'll be a lady—with a big house—and your carriage, perhaps!"

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He kissed her vehemently, as though to coerce her into agreeing with him.

But she released herself.

"You and I'll *never* be rich. We don't know how."

"Speak for yourself, please." He stretched out his right hand, laughing. "Look at that hand. If it gets a fair chance it's got money in it—and fame—and happiness for us both! *Don't* you believe in me, Phoebe? Don't you believe I shall make a painter?"

He spoke with an imperious harshness, repeating his query. It was evident, curiously evident, that he cared for her opinion.

"Of course I believe in you," she said, her chest heaving. "It's—it's—other things."

Then, coming to him again, she flung her arms piteously round him. "Oh, John, John—for a year past—and more—you've been sorry you married me!"

"What on earth's the matter with you?" he cried, half in wrath, half astonished. "What's come to you, Phoebe?"

"Oh! I know," she said, withdrawing herself and speaking in a low torrent of speech. "You were very fond of me when we married—and—and I dare say you're fond of me now—but it's different. You were a boy then—and you thought you'd get drawing-lessons in Kendal, and perhaps a place at a school—and you didn't seem to want anything more. And now you're so ambitious—so ambitious, John—I"—she turned her head away—"I sometimes feel when I'm with you—I can't breathe—it's just burning you away—and me too. You've found out what you can do—and people tell you you're so clever—and then you think you've thrown

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yourself away—and that I'm a clog on you. John"—she approached him suddenly, panting—"John, do you mean that baby and I are to stay all the winter alone in that cottage?" She motioned towards it.

He protested that he had elaborately thought out all that she must do. She must go to her father at Keswick for the summer and possibly for the winter, till he had got a footing. He would come up to see her as often as work and funds would permit. She must look after the child, make a little money perhaps by her beautiful embroidery.

"I'll not go to my father," she said, with energy.

"But why not?"

"You seem to forget that he married a second wife, John, last year."

"I'm sure Mrs. Gibson was most friendly when we were there last month. And we'd *pay*, of course—we'd pay."

"I'm not going to plant myself and Carrie down on Mrs. Gibson for six months and more, John, so don't ask me. No, we'll stay here—we'll stay here!"

She began to pluck at the grass with her hand, staring before her at the moonlit stream like one who sees visions of the future. The beauty of her faintly visible head and neck suddenly worked on John Fenwick's senses. He threw his arm round her.

"And I shall soon be back. You little silly, can't you understand that I shall always be wanting you?"

"We'll stay here," she repeated, slowly. "And you'll be in London making smart friends—and dining with rich folk—and having ladies to sit to you—"

"Phoebe, you're not jealous of me?" he cried, with a

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great, good-humored laugh—"that would be the last straw."

"Yes, I am jealous of you!" she said, with low-voiced passion; "and you know very well that I've had some cause to be."

He was silent. Through both their minds there passed the memory of some episodes in their married life—slight, but quite sufficient to show that John Fenwick was a man of temperament inevitably attracted by womankind.

He murmured that she had made mountains out of molehills. She merely raised his hand and kissed it. "The women make a fool of you, John," she said, "and I ought to be there to protect you—for you do love me, you know—you do!"

And then with tears she broke down and clung to him again, in a mood that was partly the love of wife for husband, and partly an exquisite maternity—the same feeling she gave her child. He responded with eagerness, feeling indeed that he had won his battle.

For she lay in his arms—weak—protesting no more. The note of anguish, of deep, incalculable foreboding, which she had shown, passed away from her manner and words; while on his side he began to draw pictures of the future so full of exultation and of hope, that her youth presently could but listen and believe. The sickle moon descended behind the pikes; only the stars glimmered on the great side of the fell, on solitary yews black upon the night, on lines of wall, on dim mysterious paths, old as the hills themselves, on the softly chiding water. The May night breathed upon them, calmed them, brought out the better self of each. They returned to

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the cottage like children, hand in hand, talking of a hundred practical details, thankful that the jarring moment had passed away, each refraining from any word that could wound the other. Nor was it till Fenwick was sound asleep beside her that Phoebe, replunged in loneliness and dread, gave herself in the dawn-silence to a passion of unconquerable tears.

PART II

London

"Was *that* the landmark? What,—the foolish well
Whose wave, low down, I did not stoop to drink,
But sat and flung the pebbles from its brink
In sport to send its imaged skies pell-mell
(And mine own image, had I noted well!)
Was that my point of turning? I had thought
The stations of my course should rise unsought,
As altar-stone, or ensigned citadel."

III

“**W**HY does that fellow up-stairs always pass you as though he were in a passion with somebody?” said Richard Watson, stepping back as he spoke, palette on thumb, from the picture upon which he was engaged. “He almost knocked me down this morning, and I am not conscious of having done anything to offend his worship.”

His companion in the dingy Bloomsbury studio, where they were both at work, also put down palette and brush, examining the canvas before him with a keen, cheerful air.

“Perhaps he loathes mankind, as I did yesterday.”

“And to-day it’s all right?”

“Well, come and look.”

Watson crossed over. He was a tall and splendid man, a “black Celt” from Merionethshire, with coal-black hair, and eyes deeply sunken and lined, with fatigue or ill-health. Beside him, his comrade, Philip Cuninghame, had the air of a shrewd clerk or man of business—with his light alertness of frame, his reddish hair, and sharp, small features. A pleasant, serviceable ability was stamped on Cuninghame’s whole aspect; while Watson’s large, lounging way, and dishevelled or romantic good looks suggested yet another perennial type—the dreamer entangled in the prose of life.

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He looked at the picture which Cuningham turned towards him—his hands thrust into the vast pockets of his holland coat. It was a piece of charming *genre*—a crowded scene in Rotten Row, called "Waiting for the Queen," painted with knowledge and grace; owing more to Wilkie than to Frith, and something to influences more modern than either; a picture belonging to a familiar English tradition, and worthily representing it.

"Yes—you've got it!" he said, at last, in a voice rather colorless and forced. Then he made one or two technical comments, to which the other listened with something that was partly indulgence, partly deference; adding, finally, as he moved away, "And it 'll sell, of course—like hot potatoes!"

"Well, I hope so," said Philip, beginning to put away his brushes and tubes with what seemed to be a characteristic orderliness—"or I shall be in Queer Street. But I think Lord Findon wants it. I shouldn't wonder if he turned up this afternoon!"

"Ah?" Watson raised his great shoulders with a gesture which might have been sarcastic, but was perhaps more than anything else languid and weary. He returned to his own picture, looking at it with a painful intensity.

"Nobody will ever want to buy that!" he said, quietly. Cuningham stood beside him, embarrassed.

"It's full of fine things," he said, after a moment. "But—"

"You wish I wouldn't paint such damned depressing subjects?"

"I wish you'd sometimes condescend to think of the public, old fellow!"

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"That—*never!*" said the other, under his breath. "Starve—and please yourself! But I sha'n't starve—you forget that."

"Worse luck!" laughed Cuningham. "I believe Providence ordained the British Philistine for our good—drat him! It does no one any harm to have to hook the public. All the great men have done it. You're too squeamish, Master Dick!"

Watson went on painting in silence, his lips working. Presently Cuningham caught—half lost in the beard—"There's a public of to-day, though—and a public of to-morrow!"

"Oh, all right," said Philip. "So long as you take a public of some sort into consideration! I like your jester."

He bent forward to look into the front line of the large composition crowded with life-size figures on which Watson was engaged. It was an illustration of some Chaucerian lines, describing the face of a man on his way to execution, seen among a crowd:

a pale face
Among a press . . .

so stricken, that amid all the thronging multitude, "men might know his face that was bestead," from all the rest.

The idea—of helpless pain, in the grip of cruel and triumphant force—had been realized with a passionate wealth of detail, comparable to some of the early work of Holman Hunt. The head of the victim bound with blood-stained linen, a frightened girl hiding her eyes, a mother weeping, a jester with the laugh withered on his

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lip by this sudden vision of death and irremediable woe—and in the distance a frail, fainting form, sweetheart or sister—each figure and group, rendered often with very unequal technical merit, had yet in it something harshly, intolerably true. The picture was too painful to be borne; but it was neither common, nor mean.

Cunningham turned away from it with a shudder.

"Some of it's magnificent, Dick—but I couldn't live with it if you paid me!"

"Because you look at it wrongly," said Watson, gruffly. "You take it as an anecdote. It isn't an anecdote—it's a symbol."

"What?—The World?—and The Victim?—from all time?—and to all time? Well, that makes it more grewsome than ever. Hullo, who's that? Come in!"

The door opened. A young man, in some embarrassment, appeared on the threshold.

"I believe these letters are yours," he said, offering a couple to Cunningham. "They brought them up to me by mistake."

Philip Cunningham took them with thanks, then scanned the new-comer as he was turning to depart.

"I think I saw you at Berners Street the other night?"

John Fenwick paused.

"Yes—" he said, awkwardly.

"Have you been attending all the summer?"

"Pretty well. There were about half a dozen fellows left in August. We clubbed together to keep the model going."

"I don't remember you in the Academy."

"No. I come from the North. I've painted a lot already—I couldn't be bothered with the Academy!"

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Watson turned and looked at the figure in the doorway.

"Won't you come in and sit down?"

The young man hesitated. Then something in his look kindled as it fell on Watson's superb head, with its strong, tossed locks of ebon-black hair touched with gray, the penthouse brows, and the blue eyes beneath with their tragic force of expression.

Fenwick came in and shut the door. Cuningham pushed him a chair, and Watson offered him a cigarette, which he somewhat doubtfully accepted. His two hosts—men of the educated middle-class—divined at once that he was self-taught, and risen from the ranks. Both Cuningham and Watson were shabbily dressed; but it was an artistic and metropolitan shabbiness. Fenwick's country clothes were clumsy and unbecoming; and his manner seemed to fit him as awkwardly as his coat. The sympathy of both the older artists did but go out to him the more readily.

Cuningham continued the conversation, while Watson, still painting, occasionally intervened.

They discussed the *personnel* of the life-school Fenwick was attending, the opening of a new *atelier* in North London by a well-known Academician, the successes at the current "Academy," the fame of certain leading artists. At least Cuningham talked; Fenwick's contributions were mostly monosyllabic; he seemed to be feeling his way.

Suddenly, by a change of attitude on the painter's part, the picture on which Dick Watson was engaged became visible to Fenwick. He walked eagerly up to it.

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"I say!"—his face flushed with admiration. "That figure's wonderful." He pointed to the terror-stricken culprit. "But that horse there—you don't mind, do you?—that horse is wrong!"

"I know he is! I've worked at him till I'm sick. Can't work at him no more!"

"It should be like this."

He took out a sketch-book from his pocket, caught up a piece of charcoal and rapidly sketched the horse in the attitude required. Then he handed the book to Watson, who looked first at the sketch, and then at some of the neighboring pages, which were covered with studies of horses observed mostly on the day of some trade-union procession, when mounted police were keeping the road.

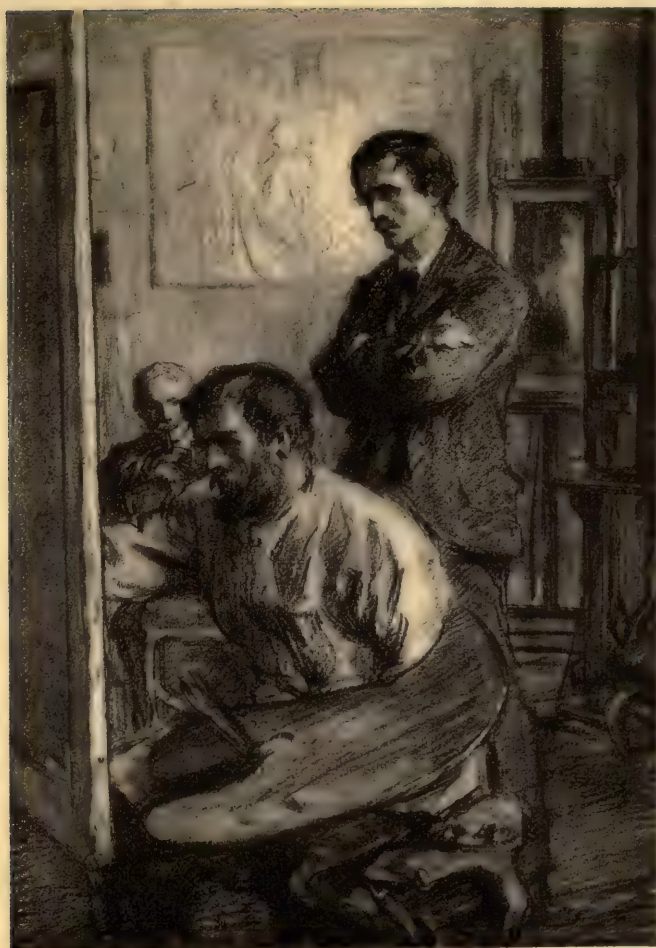
Watson was silent a moment, then, walking up to his picture, he took his palette-knife and scraped out the whole passage. "I see!" he said, and, laying down the knife, he threw himself into a chair, flushed and discomposed.

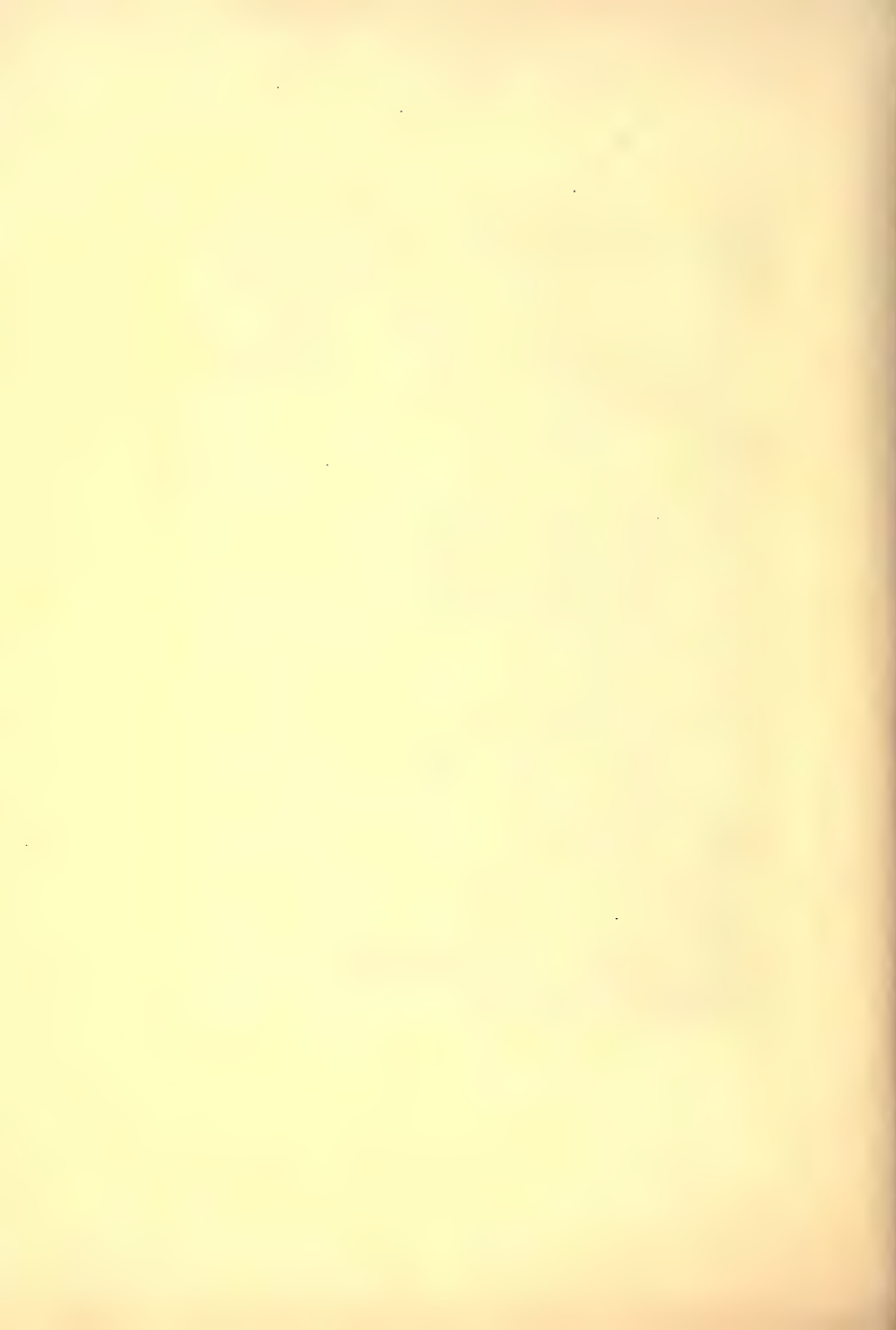
"Oh, you'll soon put it right!" said Fenwick, encouragingly.

Watson winced—then nodded.

"May I see that book?" He held out his hand, and Fenwick yielded it.

Watson and Cuninghame turned it over together. The "notes," of which it was full, showed great brilliancy and facility, an accurate eye, and a very practised hand. They were the notes of a countryman artist newly come to London. The sights, and tones, and distances of London streets—the human beings, the vehicles, the horses—were all freshly seen, as though





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under a glamour. Cuningham examined them with care.

"Is this the sort of thing you're going to do?" he said, looking up, and involuntarily his eye glanced towards his own picture on the distant easel.

Fenwick smiled.

"That's only for practice. I want to do big things—romantic things—if I get the chance."

"What a delightful subject!" said Cuningham, stooping suddenly over the book.

Fenwick started, made a half-movement as though to reclaim his property, and then withdrew his hand. Cuningham was looking at a charcoal study of a cottage interior. The round table of rude black oak was set for a meal, and a young woman was feeding a child in a pinafore who sat in a high-chair. The sketch might have been a mere piece of domestic prettiness; but the handling of it was so strong and free that it became a significant, typical thing. It breathed the North, a life rustic and withdrawn—the sweetness of home and motherhood.

"Are you going to make a picture of that?" said Watson, putting on his spectacles, and peering into it. "You'd better."

Fenwick replied that he might some day, but had too many things on hand to think of it yet awhile. Then with no explanation and a rather hasty hand he turned the page. Cuningham looked at him curiously.

They were still busy with the sketch-book, when a voice was heard on the stairs outside.

"Lord Findon," said Cuningham.

He colored a little, ran to his picture, arranged it in

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the best light, and removed a small fly which had stuck to one corner.

"Shall I go?" said Fenwick.

He too had been clearly fluttered by the name, which was that of one of the best-known buyers of the day.

Watson in reply beckoned him on to the leads, upon which the Georgian bow-window at the end of the room opened. They found themselves on a railed terrace looking to right and left on a row of gardens, each glorified by one of the plane-trees which even still make the charm of Bloomsbury.

Watson hung over the rail, smoking. He explained that Lord Findon had come to see Cunningham's picture, which he had commissioned, but not without leaving himself a loophole, in case he didn't like it.

"He will like it," said Fenwick. "It's just the kind of thing people want."

Watson said nothing, but smoked with energy. Fenwick went on talking, letting it be clearly understood that he personally thought the picture of no account, but that he knew very well that it was of a kind to catch buyers. In a few minutes Watson resented his attitude as offensive; he fell into a cold silence; Fenwick's half-concealed contempt threw him fiercely on his friend's side.

"Well, I've done the trick!" said Cunningham, coming out jauntily, his hands in his trousers pockets; then, with a jerk of the head towards the studio, and a lowered voice, "He's writing the check."

"How much?" said Watson, without turning his head. Fenwick thought it decent to walk away, but he could not prevent himself from listening. It seemed to him

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that he heard the words "Two hundred and fifty," but he could not be sure. What a price!—for such a thing. His own blood ran warm and quick.

As he stood at the farther end of the little terrace ruminating, Cuningham touched him on the shoulder.

"I say, have you got anything to show up-stairs?"

Fenwick turned to see in the sparkling eyes and confident bearing of the Scotchman, success writ large, expressing itself in an impulse of generosity.

"Yes—I've got a picture nearly finished."

"Come and be introduced to Findon. He's a crank—but a good sort—lots of money—thinks he knows everything about art—they all do—give him his head when he talks.

Fenwick nodded, and followed Cuningham back to the studio, where Lord Findon was now examining Watson's picture with no assistance whatever from the artist, who seemed to have been struck with dumbness.

Fenwick was introduced to a remarkably tall and handsome man, with the bearing of a sportsman or a soldier, who greeted him with a cordial shake of the hand, and a look of scrutiny so human and kindly that the very sharp curiosity which was in truth the foundation of it passed without offence. Lord Findon was indeed curious about everything; interested in everything; and a dabbler in most artistic pursuits. He liked the society of artists; and he was accustomed to spend some hundreds, or even thousands a year out of his enormous income, in the purchase of modern pictures. Possibly the sense of power over human lives which these acquisitions gave him pleased him even more than the acquisitions themselves.

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He asked Fenwick a few easy questions, sitting rakishly on the edge of a tilted chair, his hat slipping back on his handsome, grizzled head. Where did he come from—with whom had he studied—what were his plans? Had he ever been abroad? No. Strange! The artists nowadays neglected travel. "But you go! Beg your way, paint your way—but go! Go before the wife and the babies come! Matrimony is the deuce. Don't you agree with me, Philip?" He laid a familiar hand on the artist's arm.

"Take care!" said Cuningham, laughing. "You don't know what I may have been up to this summer."

Findon shrugged his shoulders. "I know a wise man when I see him. But the fools there are about! Well, I take a strong line,"—he waved his hand, with a kind of laughing pomposity, rolling his words—"Whenever I see a young fellow marrying before he has got his training—before he has seen a foreign gallery—before he can be sure of a year's income ahead—above all, before he knows anything at all about *women*, and the different ways in which they can play the devil with you!—well, I give him up—I don't go to see his pictures—I don't bother about him any more. The man's an ass—must be an ass!—let him bray his bray! Why, you remember Perry?—Marindin?"

On which there followed a rattling catalogue of matrimonial failures in the artist world, amusing enough—perhaps a little cruel. Cuningham laughed. Watson, on whom Lord Findon's whole personality seemed to have an effect more irritating than agreeable, fidgeted with his brushes. He struck in presently with the dry

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remark that artists were not the only persons who made imprudent marriages.

Lord Findon sprang up at once, and changed the subject. His youngest son, the year before, had married the nurse who had pulled him through typhoid—and was still in exile, and unforgiven.

Meanwhile no one had noticed John Fenwick. He stood behind the other two while Lord Findon was talking—frowning sometimes and restless—a movement now and then in lips and body, as though he were about to speak—yet not speaking. It was one of those moments when a man feels a band about his tongue, woven by shyness or false shame, or social timidity. He knows that he ought to speak; but the moment passes and he has not spoken. And between him and the word unsaid there rises on the instant a tiny streamlet of division, which is to grow and broaden with the nights and days, till it flows, a stream of fate, not to be turned back or crossed; and all the familiar fields of life are ruined and blotted out.

Finally, as the great patron was going, Cunningham whispered a word in his ear. Lord Findon turned to Fenwick.

"You're in this house, too? Have you anything you'd let me see?"

Fenwick, flushed and stammering, begged him to walk up-stairs. Cunningham's puzzled impression was that he gave the invitation reluctantly, but could not make up his mind not to give it.

They marched up-stairs, Lord Findon and Cunningham behind.

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"Does he ever sell?" said Lord Findon, in Cuningham's ear, nodding towards the broad shoulders and black head of Watson just in front.

"Not often," said Cuningham, after a pause.

"How, then, does he afford himself?" said the other, smiling.

"Oh! he has means—just enough to keep him from starving. He's a dear old fellow! He has too many ideas for this wicked world."

Cuningham spoke with a pleasant loyalty. Lord Findon shrugged his shoulders.

"The ideas are too lugubrious! And this young fellow—this Fenwick—where did you pick him up?"

Cuningham explained.

"A character! — perhaps a genius?" said Findon. "He has a clever, quarrelsome eye. Unmarried? Good Lord, I hope so, after the way I have been going on."

Cuningham laughed. "We've seen no sign of a wife. But I really know nothing about him."

They were entering the upper room, and at sight of the large picture it contained, Lord Findon exclaimed:

"My goodness!—what an ambitious thing!"

The three men gathered in front of the picture. Fenwick lingered nervously behind them.

"What do you call it?" said Lord Findon, putting up his glasses.

"The 'Genius Loci,'" said Fenwick, fumbling a little with the words.

It represented a young woman seated on the edge of a Westmoreland ghyll or ravine. Behind her the white water of the beck flowed steeply down from shelf to shelf; beyond the beck rose far-receding walls of moun-

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tain, purple on purple, blue on blue. Light, scantily nourished trees—sycamores or mountain-ash, climbed the green sides of the ghyll, and framed the woman's form. She sat on a stone, bending over a frail new-born lamb upon her lap, whereof the mother lay beside her. Against her knee leaned a fair-haired child. The pitiful concern in the woman's lovely eyes was reflected in the soft wonder of the child's. Both, it seemed, were of the people. The drawing was full of rustical suggestion, touched here and there by a harsh realism that did but heighten the general harmony. The woman's grave comeliness flowered naturally, as it were, out of the scene. She was no model, posing with a Westmoreland stream for background. She seemed a part of the fells; their silences, their breezes, their pure waters, had passed into her face.

But it was the execution of the picture which perhaps specially arrested the attention of the men examining it.

"Eclectic stuff!" said Watson to himself, presently, as he turned away—"seen with other men's eyes!"

But on Lord Findon and on Cuningham the effect was of another kind. The picture seemed to them also a combination of many things, or rather of attempts at many things—Burne-Jones's mystical color—the rustic character of a Bastien-Lepage or a Millet—with the jewelled detail of a fourteenth-century Florentine, so wonderful were the harebells in the foreground, the lichened rocks, the dabbled fleece of the lamb: but they realized that it was a combination that only a remarkable talent could have achieved.

"By Jove!" said Findon, turning on the artist with animation, "where did you learn all this?"

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"I've been painting a good many years," said Fenwick, his cheeks aglow. "But I've got on a lot this last six months."

"I suppose, in the country, you couldn't get properly at the model?"

"No. I've had no chances."

"Let's all pray to have none," said Cuningham, good-naturedly. "I had no notion you were such a swell."

But his light-blue eyes as they rested on Fenwick were less friendly. His Scotch prudence was alarmed. Had he in truth introduced a genius unawares to his only profitable patron?

"Who is the model, if I may ask?" said Lord Findon, still examining the picture.

The reply came haltingly, after a pause.

"Oh!—some one I knew in Westmoreland."

The speaker had turned red. Naturally no one asked any further questions. Cuningham noticed that the face was certainly from the same original as the face in the sketch-book, but he kept his observation to himself.

Lord Findon, with the eagerness of a Londoner discovering some new thing, fell into quick talk with Fenwick; looked him meanwhile up and down, his features, bearing, clothes; noticed his north-country accent, and all the other signs of the plebeian. And presently Fenwick, placed at his ease, began for the first time to expand, became argumentative and explosive. In a few minutes he was laying down the law in his Westmoreland manner—attacking the Academy—denouncing certain pictures of the year—with a flushed, confident face and a gesticulating hand. Watson observed him with

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some astonishment; Lord Findon looked amused—and pulled out his watch.

"Oh, well, everybody kicks the Academy—but it's pretty strong, as you'll find when you have to do with it."

"Have you been writing those articles in the *Mirror*?" said Watson, abruptly.

"I'm not a journalist." The young man's tone was sulky. He got up and his loquacity disappeared.

"Well, I must be off," said Lord Findon. "But you're coming to dinner with me to-morrow night, Cunningham, aren't you? Will you excuse a short invitation"—he turned, after a moment's pause, to Fenwick—"and accompany him? Lady Findon would, I am sure, be glad to make your acquaintance. St. James's Square, —102. All right"—as Fenwick, coloring violently, stammered an acceptance—"we shall expect you. Au revoir! I'm afraid it's no good to ask *you*!" The last words were addressed smilingly to Watson, as Lord Findon, with out-stretched hand, passed through the door, which Cunningham opened for him.

"Thank you," said Watson, with a grave inclination—"I am a hermit."

The door closed on a gay and handsome presence. Lord Findon could not possibly have been accused of anything so ill-mannered as patronage. But there was in his manner a certain consciousness of power—of vantage-ground; a certain breath of autocracy. The face of Watson showed it as he returned to look closely into Fenwick's picture.

A few minutes later Fenwick found himself alone. He stood in front of the picture, staring into Phœbe's

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eyes. A wave of passionate remorse broke upon him. He had as good as denied her; and she sat there before him like some wronged, helpless thing. He seemed to hear her voice, to see her lips moving.

Hastily he took her last letter out of his pocket.

"I *am* glad you're getting on so well, and I'm counting the weeks to Christmas. Carrie kisses your photograph morning and night, but I am afraid she'll have forgotten you a good deal. Sometimes I'm very weary here—but I don't mind if you're getting on, and if it won't be much longer. Miss Anna has sent me some new patterns for my tatting, and I'm getting a fine lot done. All the visitors are quite gone now, and it's that quiet at nights! Sometimes when it's been raining I think I can hear the Dungeon Ghyll stream, though it's more than a mile away."

Fenwick put up the letter. He had a sudden vision of Phoebe in her white night-dress, opening the casement-window of the little cottage on a starry night, and listening to the sounds of distant water. Behind her was the small room with its candle—the baby's cot—the white bed, with its vacant place. A pang of longing—of homesickness—stirred him.

Then he began to pace his room, driven by the stress of feeling to take stock of his whole position. He had reached London in May; in was now November. Six months—of the hardest effort, the most strenuous labor he had ever passed through. He looked back upon it with exultation. Never had he been so conscious of expanding power and justified ambition. Through the Berners Street life-school he had obtained some valuable coaching and advice which had corrected faults and put

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him on the track of new methods. But it was his own right hand and his own brain he had mostly to thank, together with the opportunities of London. Up early, and to bed late—drawing from the model, the antique, still life, drapery, landscape; studying pictures, old and new, and filling his sketch-book in every moment of so called leisure with the figures and actions of the great city—he had made magnificent use of his time; Phœbe could find no fault with him there.

Had he forgotten her and the babe?—found letters to her sometimes a burden, and his heart towards her dry often and barren? Well, he *had* written regularly; and she had never complained. Men cannot be like women, absorbed forever in the personal affections. For him it was the day of battle, in which a man must strain all his powers to the uttermost if any laurels are to be won before evening. His whole soul was absorbed in the stress of it, in the hungry eagerness for fame, and—though in a lesser degree—for money.

Money! The very thought of it filled him with impatient worry. Morrison's hundred was nearly gone. He knew well enough that Phœbe was right when she accused him of managing his money badly. It ran through his fingers loosely, incessantly. He hardly knew now where the next remittances to Phœbe were to come from. At first he had done a certain amount of illustrating work and had generally sent her the proceeds of it. But of late he had been absorbed in his big picture, and there had been few or no small earnings. Perhaps, if he hadn't written those articles to the *Mirror*, there would have been time for some? Well, why shouldn't

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he write them? His irritable pride took fire at once at the thought of blame.

No one could say, anyway, that he had spent money in amusement. Why, he had scarcely been out of Bloomsbury!—the rest of London might not have existed for him. A gallery seat at the Lyceum Theatre, then in its early fame, and hot discussions of Irving and Ellen Terry with such artistic or literary acquaintance as he had made through the life-school or elsewhere—these had been his only distractions. He stood amazed before his own virtues. He drank little—smoked little. As for women—he thought with laughter or wrath of Phœbe's touch of jealousy! There was an extremely pretty girl—a fair-haired, conscious minx—drawing in the same room with him at the British Museum. Evidently she would have been glad to capture him; and he had loftily denied her. If he had ever been as susceptible as Phœbe thought him, he was susceptible no more. Life burned with sterner fire!

And yet, for all these self-denials, Morrison's money and his own savings were nearly gone. Funds might hold out till after Christmas. What then?

He had heard once or twice from Morrison, asking for news of the pictures promised. Lately he had left the letters unanswered; but he lived in terror of a visit. For he had nothing to offer him—neither money nor pictures. His only picture so far—as distinguished from exercises—was the "Genius Loci." He had begun that in a moment of weariness with his student work, basing it on a number of studies of Phœbe's head and face he had brought south with him. He had been lucky enough to find a model very much resembling Phœbe in figure; and

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now, suddenly, the picture had become his passion, the centre of all his hopes. It astonished himself; he saw his artistic advance in it writ large; of late he had been devoting himself entirely to it, wrapped, like the body of Hector, in a heavenly cloud that lifted him from the earth! If the picture sold—and it would surely sell—then all paths were clear. Morrison should be paid; and Phoebe have her rights. Let it only be well hung at the Academy, and well sold to some discriminating buyer—and John Fenwick henceforward would owe no man anything—whether money or favor.

At this point he returned to his picture, grappling with it afresh in a feverish pleasure. He caught up a mirror and looked at it reversed; he put in a bold accent or two; fumed over the lack of brilliancy in some color he had bought the day before; and ended in a fresh burst of satisfaction. By Jove, it was good! Lord Findon had been evidently "bowled over" by it—Cunningham too. As for that sour-faced fellow, Watson, what did it matter what he thought?

It *must* succeed! Suddenly he found himself on his knees beside his picture, praying that he might finish it prosperously, that it might be given a good place in the Academy, and bring him fame and fortune.

Then he got up sheepishly, looked furtively round the room to be sure that the door was shut, and no one had seen him. He was a good deal ashamed of himself, for he was not in truth of a religious mind, and he had, by now, few or no orthodox beliefs. But in all matters connected with his pictures the Evangelical tradition of his youth still held him. He was the descendant of generations of men and women who had prayed on all possible

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occasions—that customers might be plentiful and business good—that the young cattle might do well, and the hay be got in dry—that their children might prosper—and they themselves be delivered from rheumatism, or tooth-ache, or indigestion. Fenwick's prayer to some "magnified non-natural man" afar off, to come and help him with his picture was of the same kind. Only he was no longer whole-hearted and simple about it, as he had been when Phoebe married him, as she was still.

He put on his studio coat and sat down to his work again, in a very tender, repentant mood. What on earth had possessed him to make that answer to Lord Findon—to let him and those other fellows take him for unmarried?

He protested, in excuse, that Westmoreland folk are "close," and don't like talking about their own affairs. He came of a secretive, suspicious stock; and had no mind at any time to part with unnecessary facts about himself. As talkative as you please about art and opinion; of his own concerns not a word! London had made him all the more cautious and reticent. No one knew anything about him except as an artist. He always posted his letters himself; and he believed that neither his landlady nor anybody else suspected him of a wife.

But to-day he had carried things too far—and a guilty discomfort weighed upon him. What was to be done? Should he on the first opportunity set himself right with Lord Findon—speak easily and unexpectedly of Phoebe and the child? Clearly what would have been simplicity itself at first was now an awkwardness. Lord Findon would be puzzled—chilled. He would suppose there was something to be ashamed of—some skeleton in the cupboard. And especially would he take it ill that Fenwick

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had allowed him to run on with his diatribes against matrimony as though he were talking to a bachelor. Then the lie about the picture. It had been the shy, foolish impulse of a moment. But how explain it to Lord Findon?

Fenwick stood there tortured by an intense and morbid distress; realizing how much this rich and illustrious person had already entered into his day dream. For all his pride as an artist—and he was full of it—his trembling, crude ambition had already seized on Lord Findon as a stepping-stone. He did not know whether he could stoop to court a patron. His own temper had to be reckoned with. But to lose him at the outset by a silly falsehood would be galling. A man who has to live in the world as a married man must not begin by making a mystery of his wife. He felt the social stupidity of what he had done; yet could not find in himself the courage to set it right.

Well, well, let him only make a hit in the Academy, sell his picture, and get some commissions. Then Phoebe should appear, and smile down astonishment. His *gaucherie* should be lost in his success.

He tossed about that night, sleepless, and thinking of Cuninghams two hundred and fifty pounds—for a picture so cheaply, commonly clever. It filled him with the thirst to *arrive*. He had more brains, more drawing, more execution—more everything!—than Cuningham. No doubt a certain prudence and tact were wanted—tact in managing yourself and your gifts.

Well!—in spite of Watson's rude remark, what human being *knew* he was writing those articles in the *Mirror*? He threw out his challenge to the darkness, and so fell asleep.

IV

FENWICK had never spent a more arduous hour than that which he devoted to the business of dressing for Lord Findon's dinner-party. It was his first acquaintance with dress-clothes. He had, indeed, dined once or twice at the tables of the Westmoreland gentry in the course of his portrait-painting experiences. But there had been no "party," and it had been perfectly understood that for the Kendal bookseller's son a black Sunday coat was sufficient. Now, however, he was to meet the great world on its own terms; and though he tried hard to disguise his nervousness from his sponsor, Philip Cuningham, he did not succeed. Cuningham instructed him where to buy a second-hand dress-suit that very nearly fitted him, and he had duly provided himself with gloves and tie. When all was done he put his infinitesimal looking-glass on the floor of his attic, flanked it with two guttering candles, and walked up and down before it in a torment, observing his own demeanor and his coat's, saying "How d'ye do?" and "Good-bye" to an imaginary host, or bending affably to address some phantom lady across the table.

When at last he descended the stairs he felt as though he were just escaped from a wrestling-match. He followed Cuningham into the omnibus with nerves all on edge. He hated the notion, too, of taking an omnibus

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to go and dine in St. James's Square. But Cuningham's Scotch thriftiness scouted the proposal of a hansom.

On the way Fenwick suddenly asked his companion whether there was a Lady Findon. Cuningham, startled by the ignorance of his *protégé*, drew out as quickly as he could *la carte du pays*.

Lady Findon, the second wife, fat, despotic, and rich, rather noisy, and something of a character, a political hostess, a good friend, and a still better hater; two sons, silent, good-looking and clever, one in the brewery that provided his mother with her money, the other in the Hussars; two daughters not long "introduced"—one pretty—the other bookish and rather plain; so ran the catalogue.

"I believe there is another daughter by the first wife—married—something queer about the husband. But I've never seen her. She doesn't often appear—Hullo—here we are."

They alighted at the Haymarket, and as they walked down the street Fenwick found himself in the midst of the evening whirl of the West End. The clubs were at their busiest; men passed them in dress-suits and overcoats like themselves, and the street was full of hansom, whence the faces of well-dressed women, enveloped in soft silks and furs, looked out.

Fenwick felt himself treading a new earth. At such an hour he was generally wending his way to a Bloomsbury eating-house, where he dined for eighteen-pence; he was a part of the striving, moneyless student-world.

But here, from this bustling Haymarket with its gay, hurrying figures, there breathed new forces, new passions which bewildered him. As he was looking at the faces

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in the carriages, the jewels and feathers and shining stuffs, he thought suddenly and sharply of Phœbe sitting alone at her supper in the tiny cottage room. His heart smote him a little. But, after all, was he not on her business as well as his own?

The door of Lord Findon's house opened before them. At sight of the liveried servants within, Fenwick's pride asserted itself. He walked in, head erect, as though the place belonged to him.

Lord Findon came pleasantly to greet them as they entered the drawing-room, and took them up to Lady Findon. Cuningham she already knew, and she gave a careless glance and a touch of the hand to his companion. It was her husband's will to ask these raw, artistic youths to dinner, and she had to put up with it; but really the difficulty of knowing whom to send them in with was enormous.

"I am glad to make your acquaintance," she said, mechanically to Fenwick, as he stood awkwardly beside her, while her eyes searched the door for a cabinet minister and his wife who were the latest guests.

"Thank you; I too am pleased to make yours," said Fenwick, nervously pulling at his gloves, and furious with his own *malaise*.

Lady Findon's eyebrows lifted in amusement. She threw him another glance.

Good-looking!—but really Findon should wait till they were a little *décrotté*.

"I hear your picture is charming," she said, distractedly; and then, suddenly perceiving the expected figures, she swept forward to receive them.

"Very sorry, my dear fellow, we have no lady for you;

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but you will be next my daughter, Madame de Pastourelles," said Lord Findon, a few minutes later, in his ear, passing him with a nod and a smile. His gay, half fatherly ways with these rising talents were well known. They made part of his fame with his contemporaries; a picturesque element in his dinner-parties which the world appreciated.

Fenwick found his way rather sulkily to the dining-room. It annoyed him that Cuningham had a lady and he had none. His companion on the road down-stairs was the private secretary, who tried good-naturedly to point out the family portraits on the staircase wall. But Fenwick scarcely replied. He stalked on, his great black eyes glancing restlessly from side to side; and the private secretary thought him a boor.

As he was standing bewildered inside the dining-room a servant caught hold of him and piloted him to his seat. A lady in white, who was already seated in the next chair, looked up and smiled.

"My father told me we were to be neighbors. I must introduce myself."

She held out a small hand, which, in his sudden pleasure, Fenwick grasped more cordially than was necessary. She withdrew it smiling, and he sat down, feeling himself an impulsive ass, intimidated by the lights, the flowers, the multitude of his knives and forks, and most of all, perhaps, by this striking and brilliant creature beside him.

Madame de Pastourelles was of middle height, slenderly built, with pale-brown hair, and a delicately white face, of a very perfect oval. She had large, quiet eyes, darker than her hair; features small, yet of a noble out-

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line—strength in refinement. The proud cutting of the nose and mouth gave delight; it was a pride so unconscious, so masked in sweetness, that it challenged without wounding. The short upper lip was sensitive and gay; the eyes ranged in a smiling freedom; the neck and arms were beautiful. Her dress, according to the Whistlerian phrase just coming into vogue, might have been called an "arrangement in white." The basis of it seemed to be white velvet; and breast and hair were powdered with diamonds delicately set in old flower-like shapes.

"You are in the same house with Mr. Cuningham?" she asked, when a dean had said grace and the soup was served. Her voice was soft and courteous; the irritation in Fenwick felt the soothing of it.

"I am on the floor above."

"He paints charming things."

Fenwick hesitated.

"You think so?" he said, bluntly, turning to look at her.

She colored slightly and laughed.

"Do you mean to put me in the Palace of Truth?"

"Of course I would if I could," said Fenwick, also laughing. "But I suppose ladies never say quite what they mean."

"Oh yes they do. Well, then, I am not much enamoured of Mr. Cuningham's pictures. I like *him*, and my father likes his painting."

"Lord Findon admires that kind of thing?"

"Besides a good many other kinds. Oh! my father has a dreadfully catholic taste. He tells me you haven't been abroad yet?"

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Fenwick acknowledged it.

"Ah, well; of course you'll go. All artists do—except"—she dropped her voice—"the gentleman opposite."

Fenwick looked, and beheld a personage scarcely, indeed, to be seen at all for his very bushy hair, whiskers, and mustache, from which emerged merely the tip of a nose and a pair of round eyes in spectacles. As, however, the hair was of an orange color and the eyes of a piercing and pinlike sharpness, the eclipse of feature was not a loss of effect. And as the flamboyant head was a tolerably familiar object in the shop-windows of the photographers and in the illustrated papers, Fenwick recognized almost immediately one of the most popular artists of the day—Mr. Herbert Sherratt.

Fenwick flushed hotly.

"Lord Findon doesn't admire *his* work?" he said, almost with fierceness, turning to his companion.

"He hates his pictures and collects his drawings."

"Drawings!" Fenwick shrugged his shoulders. "Any body can make a clever drawing. It's putting on the paint that counts. Why doesn't he go abroad?"

"Oh, well, he does go to Holland. But he thinks Italian painting all stuff, and that so many Madonnas and saints encourage superstition. But what's the use of talking? They have to station a policeman beside his picture in the Academy to keep off the crowd. Hush-sh! He is looking this way."

She turned her head, and Fenwick feared she was lost to him. He managed to get in another question. "Are there any other painters here?"

She pointed out the president of the Academy, a

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sculptor, and an art-critic, at whose name Fenwick curled his lip, full of the natural animosity of the painter to the writer.

"And, of course, you know my neighbor?"

Fenwick looked hastily, and saw a very handsome youth bending forward to answer a question which Lord Findon had addressed to him from across the table; a face in the "grand style"—almost the face of a Greek—pure in outline, bronzed by foreign suns, and lit by eyes expressing so strong a force of personality that, but for the sweetness with which it was tempered, the spectator might have been rather repelled than won. When the young man answered Lord Findon, the voice was, like the face, charged—perhaps overcharged—with meaning and sensibility.

"I took Madame de Pastourelles to see it to-day," the youth was saying. "She thought it as glorious as I did."

"Oh! you are a pair of enthusiasts," said Lord Findon. "*I* keep my head."

The "it" turned out to be a Titian portrait from the collection of an old Roman family, lately brought to London and under offer to the National Gallery, of which Lord Findon was a trustee.

Madame de Pastourelles looked towards her father, confirming what the unknown youth had said. Her eyes had kindled. She began to talk rapidly in defence of her opinion. Between her, Lord Findon, and her neighbor, there arose a conversation which made Fenwick's ears tingle. How many things and persons and places it touched upon that were wholly unknown to him! Pictures in foreign museums—Vienna, Berlin, St.

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Petersburg—the names of French or German experts—quotations from Italian books or newspapers—the three dealt lightly and familiarly with a world in which Fenwick had scarcely a single landmark. How clever she was! how charming! What knowledge without a touch of pedantry! And how the handsome youth kept up with her—nay, rather, led her, with a mastery, a resource, to which she always yielded in case of any serious difference of opinion! It seemed that they had been abroad together—had seen many sights in each other's company—had many common friends.

Fenwick felt himself strangely sore and jealous as he listened. Who was this man? Some young aristocrat no doubt, born silver spoon in mouth—one of your idle, insolent rich, with nothing to do but make a hobby of art, and patronize artists. He loathed the breed.

Her voice startled him back from these unspoken tirades, and once more he found her eyes fixed upon him. It provoked him to feel that their scrutiny made him self-conscious—anxious to please. They were so gentle, so gay!—and yet behind the first expression there sat what seemed to him the real personality, shrewd, critical, and remote.

"You must see this picture," she said, kindly. "It's glorious!"

"Where is it?"

"In a house near here. But father could get you in."

He hesitated, then laughed, ungraciously.

"I don't seem to have finished yet with the National Gallery. Who—please—is the gentleman on your right?"

She smiled.

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"Oh! don't you know him? You must let me introduce him. It is Mr. Arthur Welby. Doesn't he talk well?"

She introduced them. Welby received the introduction with a readiness—a touch of eagerness indeed—which seemed to show a mind favorably prepared for it.

"Lord Findon tells me you're sending in a most awfully jolly thing to the Academy!" he said, bending across Madame de Pastourelles, his musical voice full of cordiality. Fenwick made a muttered reply. It might have been thought he disliked being talked to about his own work. Welby accordingly changed the subject at once; he returned to the picture he had been pressing on Lord Findon.

"Haven't you seen it? You really should." But this elicited even less response. Fenwick glared at him—apparently tongue-tied. Then Madame de Pastourelles and her neighbor talked to each other, endeavoring to draw in the stranger. In vain. They fell back, naturally, into the talk of intimates, implying a thousand common memories and experiences; and Fenwick found himself left alone.

His mind burned with annoyance and self-disgust. Why did he let these people intimidate him? Why was he so ridiculously self-conscious?—so incapable of holding his own? He knew all about Arthur Welby; his name and fame were in all the studios. The author of the picture of the year—in the opinion, at least, of the cultivated minority for whom rails and policemen were not the final arbiters of merit; glorified in the speeches at the Academy banquet; and already overwhelmed with more commissions than he could take—Welby

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should have been one of the best hated of men. On the contrary, his mere temperament had drawn the teeth of that wild beast, Success. Well-born, rich, a social favorite, trained in Paris and Italy, an archæologist and student as well as a painter, he commanded the world as he pleased. Society asked him to dinners, and he gave himself no professional airs and went when he could. But among his fellows he lived a happy comrade's life, spending his gifts and his knowledge without reserve, always ready to help a man in a tight place, to praise a friend's picture, to take up a friend's quarrel. He took his talent and his good-fortune so simply that the world must needs insist upon them, instead of contesting them.

As for his pictures, they were based on the Italian tradition—rich, accurate, learned, full of literary allusion and reminiscence. In Fenwick's eyes, young as was their author, they were of the past rather than of the future. He contemptuously thought of them as belonging to a dead *genre*. But the man who painted them could *draw*.

Meanwhile he seemed to have lost Madame de Pastourelles, and must needs fall back on the private secretary beside him. This gentleman, who had already entered him on the tablets of the mind as a mannerless outsider, was not particularly communicative. But at least Fenwick learned the names of the other guests. The well-known Ambassador beside Lady Findon, with a shrewd, thin, sulky face, and very black eyes under whitish hair—eyes turned much more frequently on the pretty actress to his right than upon his hostess; a financier opposite, much concerned with great, colonial projects;

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the Cabinet Minister—of no account, it seemed, either in the House or in the Cabinet—and his wife abnormally thin, and far too discreet for the importance of her husband's position; a little farther, the wife of the red-haired Academician, a pale, frightened creature who looked like her husband's apology, and was in truth his slave;—all these he learned gradually to discriminate.

So this was the great world. He was stormily pleased to be in it, and at the same time scornful of it. It seemed to contain not a few ancient shams and hollow pretenders—

Ah! once more the soft, ingratiating voice beside him. Madame de Pastourelles was expressing a flattering wish to see his picture, of which her father had talked so much.

"And he says you have found such a beautiful model—or, rather, better than beautiful—characteristic."

Fenwick stared at her. It was on the tip of his tongue to say "she is my wife." But he did not say it. He imagined her look of surprise—"Ah, my father had no idea!"—imagined it with a morbid intensity, and saw no way of confronting or getting round it; not at the dinner-table, anyway—with all these eyes and ears about him—above all, with Lord Findon opposite. Why, they might think he had been ashamed of Phœbe!—that there was some reason for hiding her away. It was ridiculous—most annoying and absurd; but now that the thing had happened, he must really choose his own moment for unravelling the coil.

So he stammered something unintelligible about a "Westmoreland type," and then hastily led the talk to some other schemes he had in mind. With the sense of

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having escaped a danger he found his tongue for the first time, and the power of expressing himself.

Madame de Pastourelles listened attentively—drew him out, indeed—made him show himself to the best advantage. And presently, at a moment of pause, she said, with a smile and a shrug, "How happy you are to have an art! Now I—"

She let her hand fall with a little plaintive movement.

"I am sure you paint," said Fenwick, eagerly.

"No."

"Then you are musical?"

"Not at all. I embroider—"

"All women should," said Fenwick, trying for a free and careless air.

"I read—"

"You do not need to say it."

She opened her eyes at this readiness of reply; but still pursued:

"And I have a Chinese pug."

"And no children?" The words rose to Fenwick's lips, but remained unspoken. Perhaps she divined them, for she began hastily to describe her dog—its tricks and fidelities. Fenwick could meet her here; for a mongrel fox-terrier—taken, a starving waif, out of the streets—had been his companion since almost the first month of his solitude. Each stimulated the other, and they fell into those legends of dog-life in which every dog-lover believes, however sceptical they may be in other directions. Till presently she said, with a sigh and a stiffening of her delicate features:

"But mine shows some symptoms of paralysis. He

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was run over last summer. I am afraid it will be long and painful."

Fenwick replied that she should send for the vet. and have the dog painlessly killed.

"No. I shall nurse him."

"Why should you look on at suffering?"

"Why not—if sometimes he enjoys life?"

"I am thinking of the mistress."

"Oh, for us," she said, quickly, "for me—it is good to be with suffering."

As she spoke, she drew herself slightly more erect. Neither tone nor manner showed softness, made any appeal. The words seemed to have dropped from her, and the strange pride and dignity she at once threw around them made a veiling cloud through which only a man entirely without the finer perceptions would have tried to penetrate. Fenwick, for all his surface *gaucherie*, did not attempt it. But he attacked her generalization. With some vehemence he developed against it a Neopagan doctrine of joy—love of the earth and its natural pleasures—courage to take and dare—avoidance of suffering—and war on asceticism. He poured out a number of undigested thoughts, which showed a great deal of reading, and at least betrayed a personality, whatever value they might have as a philosophy.

She listened with a charming kindness, laughing now and then, putting in a humorous comment or two, and never by another word betraying her own position. But he was more and more conscious of the double self in her—of the cultivated, social self she was bringing into play for his benefit, and of something behind—a spirit watchful and still—wrapped in a great melancholy—or per-

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haps a great rebellion? And by this sense of something concealed or strongly restrained, she began to affect his imagination, and so, presently, to absorb his attention. Something exquisite in her movements and looks, also in the quality of her voice and the turn of her phrases, drew from his own crude yet sensitive nature an excited response. He began to envisage what these highly trained women of the upper class, these *raffinées* of the world, may be for those who understand them—a stimulus, an enigma, an education.

It flashed on him that women of this type could teach him much that he wanted to know; and his ambition seized on the idea. But what chance that she would ever give another thought to the raw artist to whom her father had flung a passing invitation?

He made haste, indeed, to prove his need of her or some other Egeria; for she was no sooner departed with the other ladies than he came to mischief. Left alone with the gentlemen, his temperament asserted itself. He had no mind in any company to be merely a listener. Moreover, that slight, as he regarded it, of sending him down without a lady, still rankled; and last, but not least, he had drunk a good deal of champagne, to which he was quite unaccustomed. So that when Lord Findon fell into a discussion with the Ambassador of Irving's "Hamlet" and "Othello," then among the leading topics of London—when the foreigner politely but emphatically disparaged the English actor and Lord Findon with zeal defended him—who should break into the august debate but this strong-browed, black-eyed fellow, from no one knew where, whose lack of some of the smaller conven-

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tions had already been noticed by a few of the company?

At first all looked well. A London dinner-party loves novelty, and is always ready to test the stranger within its gates. Fenwick slipped into the battle as a supporter of Lord Findon's argument, and his host with smiling urbanity welcomed him to the field. But in a few minutes the new-comer had ravaged the whole of it. The older men were silenced, and Fenwick was leaning across the table, gesticulating with one hand, and lifting his port-wine with the other, addressing now Lord Findon and now the Ambassador—who stared at him in amazement—with an assurance that the world only allows to its oldest favorites. Lord Findon in vain tried to stop him.

"Didn't know this was to be a dinner with speeches," murmured the financier, after a few minutes, in his neighbor's ear. "Think I'll get up and propose a vote of thanks to the chairman."

"There ought, at least, to be a time-limit," said the neighbor, with a shrug. "Where on earth did Findon pick him up?"

"I say, what an awfully rum chap!" said the young son of the house—wondering—to Arthur Welby. "What does he talk like that for?"

"He doesn't talk badly," said Welby, whose mouth showed the laughter within.

Meanwhile Fenwick—loud-voiced, excited—had brought his raid to a climax by an actual attack upon the stately Frenchman opposite, whose slight sarcastic look pricked him intolerably. All other conversation at the table fell dumb.

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Lord Findon colored, and rose.

"You are a great deal more sure of my own opinion than I am myself," he said, coldly. "I am much obliged to you, but—shall we adjourn this conversation?"

As the men walked up-stairs Fenwick realized that he had blundered; he felt himself isolated and in disfavor. Arthur Welby had approached him, but Lord Findon had rather pointedly drawn an arm through Welby's and swept him away. No one else spoke to him, and even the private secretary, who had before befriended him, left him severely alone. None of the ladies in the drawing-room up-stairs showed, as it seemed to him, any desire for his company, and he was reduced to looking at a stand of miniatures near the door, while his heart swelled fiercely. So this was what society meant?—a wretched pleasure purchased on degrading terms! A poor dependant like himself, he supposed, was to be seen and not heard—must speak when he was spoken to, play chorus, and whisper humbleness. As to meeting these big-wigs on equal terms, that clearly was not expected. An artist may be allowed to know something about art; on any other subject let him listen to his betters. He said to himself that he was sick of the whole business; and he would gladly have slipped through the open door down the stairs, and out of the house. He was restrained, however, by the protest of a sore ambition which would not yet admit defeat. Had he set Lord Findon against him?—ruined the chance of a purchaser for his picture and of a patron for the future? Out of the corner of his eye he saw Cuninghame, neat, amiable, and self-possessed, sitting in a corner by Lady Findon, who smiled and chatted incessantly. And it was clear to him

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that Welby was the spoiled child of the room. Wherever he went men and women grouped themselves about him; there was a constant eagerness to capture him, an equal reluctance to let him go.

"Well, I'm as good as he—as either of them," thought Fenwick fiercely, as he handled a Cosway. "Only they can talk these people's lingo, and I can't. I can paint as well as they any day—and I'll be bound, if they let me alone, I could talk as well. Why do people ask you to their houses and then ill-treat you? Damn them!"

Meanwhile, Lord Findon had had a few whispered words with his daughter in an inner room.

"My dear!"—throwing up his hands—"a *barbarian!* Can't have him here again."

"Mr. Fenwick, papa?"

"Of course. Cuningham ought to have warned me. However, I suppose I brought it on myself. I do these rash things, and must pay for them. He was so rude to De Chailles that I have had to apologize."

"Poor papa! Where is he?"

"In the other room—looking at things. Better leave him alone."

"Oh no; he'll feel himself neglected."

"Well, let him. A man ought to be made to understand that he can't behave like that."

"What did he do?"

"My dear, he spoiled the whole business after dinner—harangued the table!—as good as told De Chailles he had no right to talk about Irving or Shakespeare, being a foreigner. You never saw such an exhibition!"

"Poor Mr. Fenwick. I must go and talk to him."

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"Eugénie, don't be a goose. Why should you take any trouble about him?"

"He's wonderfully clever, papa. And clever people are always getting into scrapes. Somebody must take him in hand."

And, rising, she threw her father a whimsical backward look as she departed. Lord Findon watched her with mingled smiles and chagrin. How charmingly she was dressed to-night—his poor Eugénie! And how beautifully she moved!—with what grace and sweetness! As he turned to do his duty by an elderly countess near him, he stifled a sigh—that was also an imprecation.

It had often been said of Eugénie de Pastourelles that she possessed a social magic. She certainly displayed it on this occasion. Half an hour later Lord Findon, who was traversing the drawing-rooms after having taken the Ambassadors to her carriage, found a regenerate and humanized Fenwick sitting beside his daughter; the centre, indeed, of a circle no less friendly to untutored talent than the circle of the dinner-table had been hostile. Lord Findon stopped to listen. Really the young man was now talking decently!—about matters he understood; Burne-Jones, Rossetti—some French pictures in Bond Street—and so forth. The ruffled host was half appeased, half wroth. For if he *could* make this agreeable impression, why such a superfluity of naughtiness down-stairs? And the fellow had really some general cultivation; nothing like Welby, of course—where would you find another Arthur Welby?—but enough to lift him above the mere journeyman. After all, one must be indulgent to these novices—with no traditions behind them—and no—well, to put it plainly—no grandfathers! And

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so, with reflections of this kind, the annoyance of a good-natured man subsided.

It was all Eugénie's doing, of course. She and Welby between them had caught the bear, tamed him, and set him to show whatever parlor tricks he possessed. Just like her! He hoped the young man understood her condescension—and that to see her and talk with her was a privilege. Involuntarily Lord Findon glanced across the room, at the *décolleté* shoulders and *buxom* good looks of his wife. When Eugénie was in the house the second Lady Findon never seemed to him well dressed.

When Fenwick and Cuninghame had departed—Fenwick in a glow of grateful good-humor, expressing himself effusively to his host—Madame de Pastourelles approached her father, smiling.

"That youth has asked me to sit to him."

"The audacious rascal!" cried Lord Findon, fuming. "He has never seen you before—and, besides, how does any one know what he can do?"

"Why, you said yourself his picture was remarkable."

"So it is. But what's one picture? What do you think, Welby?" he said, impulsively addressing the man beside him. "Wasn't it like his impudence?"

Welby smiled.

"Like Eugénie's kindness! It was rather charming to see his look when she said 'Yes'!"

"You said 'Yes'!" Lord Findon stared at her.

"Come with me and see what he can do in a morning." She laid a quieting hand on her father's arm. "You know that always amuses you. And I want to see his picture."

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"His picture is not bad," said Lord Findon, with decision.

"I think you will have to buy it, papa."

"There you go," said Lord Findon—"letting me in!"

"Well, I'm off to bed." Smiling, she gave her hand to each, knowing that she had gained her point, or would gain it. Arthur Welby, turning, watched her move away, say "Good-night" to Lady Findon, and disappear through a distant door. Then for him, though the room was still full of people, it was vacant. He slipped away without any more "Good-byes."

V

IT was Christmas Eve, and the dark had fallen. The train from Euston had just drawn up in Windermere station, and John Fenwick, carrying his bag, was making his way among the vehicles outside the station, inquiring whether any one was going in the direction of Great Langdale, who could give him a lift. He presently found a farmer's cart bound for a village on the road, and made a bargain with the lad driving it to carry him to his destination.

They set off in bitter weather. The driver was a farmer's son who had come to the station to fetch his small brother. Fenwick and he took the little school-boy between them, to protect him as best they could from the wind and sleet. They piled some empty sacks, from the back of the cart, on their knees and shoulders; and the old gray horse set forward cautiously, feeling its way down the many hills of the Ambleside road.

The night was not yet wholly in possession. The limestone road shone dimly white, the forms of the leafless trees passed them in a windy procession, and afar on the horizon, beyond the dark gulf of the lake, there was visible at intervals a persistent dimness, something less black than the sky above and the veiled earth below, which Fenwick knew must be the snowy tops of the mountains. But it was a twilight more mournful than

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a total darkness; the damp air was nipping cold, and every few minutes gusts of sleet drove in their faces.

The two brothers talked to each other sometimes, in a broad Westmoreland speech. To Fenwick the dialect of his childhood was already strange and disagreeable. So, too, was the wild roughness of the Northern night, the length of the road, the sense of increasing distance from all that most held his mind. He longed, indeed, to see Phoebe and the child, but it was as though he had wilfully set up some barrier between himself and them, which spoiled his natural pleasure. Moreover, he was afraid of Phoebe, of her quick jealous love, and of certain passionate possibilities in her character that he had long ago discerned. If she discovered that he had made a mystery of his marriage—that he had passed in London as unmarried? It was an ugly and uncomfortable "if." Did he shrink from the possible blow to her—or the possible trouble to himself? Well, she must not find it out! It had been a wretched sort of accident, and before it could do any harm it should be amended.

Suddenly, a sound of angry water. They were close on the lake, and waves driven by the wind were plashing on the shore. Across the lake, a light in a house-window shone through the storm, the only reminder of human life amid a dark wilderness of mountains. Wild sounds crashed through the trees; and accompanying the tumult of water came the rattle of a bitter rain, lashing the road, the cart, and their bent shoulders.

"There'll not be a dry stitch on us soon," said Fenwick, presently, to the young man beside him.

"Ay, it's dampish," said his companion, cheerfully.

The caution of the adjective set Fenwick grinning.

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The North found and gripped him; these are not the ways of the South.

And in a moment the sense of contrast, thus provoked, had carried him far—out of the Westmoreland night, back to London, and his shabby studio in Bernard Street. There, throned on a low platform, sat Madame de Pastourelles; and to her right, himself, sitting crouched before his easel, working with all his eyes and all his mind. The memory of her was, as it were, physically stamped upon his sight, his hands; such an intensity of study had he given to every detail of her face and form. Did he like her? He didn't know. There were a number of curious resentments in his mind with regard to her. Several times in the course of their acquaintance she had cheapened or humiliated him in his own eyes; and the sensation had been of a sharpness as yet unknown to him.

Of course, there was in it, one way or another, an aristocratic insolence! There must be: to move so delicately and immaculately through life, with such superfine perceptions, must mean that you were brought up to scorn the common way, and those who walk in it. "The poor in a lump are bad"—coarse and ill-mannered at any rate—that must be the real meaning of her soft dignity, so friendly yet so remote, her impossibly ethereal standards, her light words that so often abashed a man for no reasonable cause.

She had been sitting to him, off and on, for about six weeks. Originally she had meant him to make a three-hours' sketch of her. He triumphed in the remembrance that she and Lord Findon had found the sketch so remarkable that, when he had timidly proposed a portrait

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in oils, Lord Findon himself had persuaded her to sit. Since that moment his work on the portrait, immediately begun, had absorbed him to such a degree that the "Genius Loci," still unfinished, had been put aside, and must have its last touches when he returned to town.

But in the middle of the sittings, Madame de Pastourelles being away, and he in a mood to destroy all that he had done, he had suddenly spent a stray earning on a railway ticket to Paris.

There—excitement—illumination!—and a whole fresh growth of ambition! Some of the mid-century portraits in the Luxembourg, and in a loan exhibition then open in the Rue Royale, excited him so that he lost sleep and appetite. The work of Bastien-Lepage was also to be seen; and the air rang with the cries of Impressionism. But the beautiful surface of the older men held him. How to combine the breadth of the new with the keeping, the sheer *pleasure* of the old! He rushed home—aflame!—and fell to work again.

And now he found himself a little more able to cope with his sitter. He was in possession, at any rate, of fresh topics—need not feel himself so tongue-tied in the presence of this cosmopolitan culture of hers, which she did her feminine best to disguise—which nevertheless made the atmosphere of her personality. She had lived some six years in Paris, it appeared; and had known most of the chief artists and men of letters. Fenwick writhed under his ignorance of the French language; it was a disadvantage not to be made up.

However, he talked much, and sometimes arrogantly; he gave his views, compared one man with another; if he felt any diffidence, he showed little. And indeed she

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led him on. Upon his art he had a right to speak, and the keen intellectual interest she betrayed in his impressions—the three days' impressions of a painter—stirred and flattered him.

But he made a great many rather ludicrous mistakes, inevitable to one who had just taken a first canter through the vast field of French art; mistakes in names and dates, in the order of men and generations. And when he made a blunder he was apt to stick to it absurdly, or excuse it elaborately. She soon gave up correcting him, even in the gentle, hesitating way she at first made use of. She said nothing; but there was sometimes mischief, perhaps mockery, in her eyes. Fenwick knew it; and would either make fresh plunges, or paint on in a sulky silence.

How on earth had she guessed the authorship of those articles in the *Mirror*? He supposed he must have talked the same kind of stuff to her. At any rate, she had made him feel in some intangible way that it seemed to her a dishonorable thing to be writing anonymous attacks upon a body from whom you were asking, or intending to ask, exhibition space for your pictures, and the chance of selling your work. His authorship was never avowed between them. Nevertheless this criticism annoyed and pricked him. He said to himself that it was just like a woman—who always took the personal view. But he had not yet begun on his last two articles, which were overdue.

On one occasion, encouraged perhaps by some kindness of expression on her part, he had ventured an indirect question or two, meant to procure him some information about her past history and present way of

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life. She had rebuffed him at once; and he had said to himself fiercely that it was of course because he was a man of the people and she one of "the upper ten." He might paint her; but he must not presume to know her!

On the other hand, his mind was still warm with memories of her encouragement, her praise. Sometimes in their talks he would put the portrait aside, and fall to sketching for her—either to illustrate his memories of pictures, or things noticed in French life and landscapes. And as the charcoal worked; as he forgot himself in hurried speech, and those remarks fell from him which are the natural outcome of a painter's experience, vivacious also and touched with literature; then her brown eyes would lighten and soften, and for once his mind would feel exultant that it moved with hers on equal terms—nay, that he was teacher and she taught. Whenever there emerged in him the signs of that demonic something that makes greatness she would be receptive, eager, humble even. But again his commoner, coarser side, his mere lack of breeding would reappear; and she would fall back on her cold or gentle defensiveness. Thus protected by what his wrath called "airs," she was a mystery to him, yet a mystery that tamed and curbed him. He had never dreamed that such women existed. His own views of women were those of the shopkeeping middle class, practical, selfish, or sensual. But he had been a reader of books; and through Madame de Pastourelles certain sublimities or delicacies of poetry began to seem to him either less fantastic or more real.

All the same:—he was not sure that he liked her, and while one hour he was all restlessness to resume his task,

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the next it was a relief to be temporarily quit of it. As for Lord Findon, except for a certain teasing vagueness on the business side of things, he had shown himself a good friend. Several times since the first variegated evening had Fenwick dined with them, mostly *en famille*. Lady Findon, indeed, had been away, nursing an invalid father; Madame de Pastourelles filled her place. The old fellow would talk freely—politics, connoisseurship, art. Fenwick too was allowed his head, and said his say; though always surrounded and sometimes chafing under that discipline of good society which is its only or its best justification. It flattered his vanity enormously, however, to be thus within touch of the inner circle in politics and art; for the Findons had relations and friends in all the foremost groups of both; and incidentally Fenwick, who had the grudges and some of the dreams of the democrat, was beginning to have a glimpse of the hidden springs and powers of English society—to his no small bewilderment often!

Great luck—he admitted—all this:—for a nameless artist of the people, only six months in London. He owed it to Cuningham, and believed himself grateful. Cuningham was often at the Findons, made a point, indeed, of going. Was it to maintain his place with them, and to keep Fenwick under observation? Fenwick triumphantly believed that Lord Findon greatly preferred his work—and even, by now, his conversation—to Cuningham's. But he was still envious of Cuningham's smooth tact, and agreeable, serviceable ways.

As to Welby and his place in the Findon circle, that was another matter altogether. He came and went as he pleased, on brotherly terms with the son and the

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younger daughters, clearly an object of great affection to Lord Findon, and often made use of by her ladyship. What was the degree of friendship between him and Madame de Pastourelles?—that had been already the subject of many meditations on Fenwick's part.

The cart deposited the school-boy in Brathay and started again for Langdale.

"Yo' couldna' get at Langdale for t' snaw lasst week," said the young farmer, as they turned a corner into the Skelwith valley. "T' rōads were fair choked wi't."

"It's been an early winter," said Fenwick.

"Ay, and t' Langdales get t' brunt o't. It's wild livin' there, soomtimes, i' winter."

They began to climb the first steep hill of the old road to Langdale. The snow lay piled on either side of the road, the rain beat down, and the trees clashed and moaned overhead. Not a house, not a light, upon their path—only swirling darkness, opening now and then on that high glimmer of the snow. Fresh from London streets, where winter, even if it attack in force, is so soon tamed and conquered, Fenwick was for the first time conscious of the harsher, wilder aspects of his native land. Poor Phoebe! Had she been a bit lonesome in the snow and rain?

The steep lane to the cottage was still deep in snow. The cart could not attempt it. Fenwick made his way up, fighting the eddying sleet. As he let fall the latch of the outer gate, the cottage door opened, and Phoebe, with the child in her arms, stood on the threshold.

"John!"

"Yes! God bless my soul, what a night!" He reached the door, put down his umbrella with difficulty,

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and dragged his bag into the passage. Then, in a moment, his coat was off and he had thrown his arm round her and the child. It seemed to him that she was curiously quiet and restrained. But she kissed him in return, drew him farther within the little passage, and shut the outer door shivering.

"The kitchen's warm," she said, "at last!"

She led him in, and he found the low-ceiled room bright with fire and lamp, the table spread, and his chair beside the blaze. She made him take off his coat, and kneeling down she tried to unlace his wet boots.

"No, no!" he said, holding her away—"I'll do that, Phœbe. What's wrong with you?—you look so—so queer!"

She straightened herself, and with a laugh put back her fair hair. Her face was very pale—a grayish pallor—and her wonderful eyes stared from it in an odd, strained way.

"Oh, I'm all right," she said; and she turned away from him to the fire, opening the oven-door to see whether the meat-pie was done.

"How have you kept in this weather?" he said, watching her. "I'd no notion you'd had it so bad."

"Oh, I don't know. I suppose I've had a chill or something. It's been rather weariful."

"You didn't tell me anything about your chill."

"Didn't I? It seems hardly worth while telling such things, from such a distance. Will you have supper at once?"

He drew up to the table, and she fed him and hovered round him, asking the while about his work, in a rather perfunctory way, about his rooms and the price of them,

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inquiring after the state of his clothes. But her tone and manner were unlike herself, and there was in his mind a protesting consciousness that she had not welcomed him as a young wife should after a long separation. Her manner too was extraordinarily nervous; her hand shook as she touched a plate; her movements were full of starts, and checks, as though, often, she intended a thing and then forgot it.

They avoided talking about money, and he did not mention the name of Madame de Pastourelles; though of course his letters had reported the external history of the portrait. But Phœbe presently inquired after it.

"Have you nearly done painting that lady, John?—I don't know how to say her name."

As she spoke, she lifted a bit of bread-and-butter to her mouth and put it down untasted. In the same way she had tried to drink some tea, and had not apparently succeeded. Fenwick rose and went over to her.

"Look here, Phœbe," he said, putting his hand on her beautiful hair and turning her face to him—"what's the matter?"

Her eyelids closed, and a quiver went through the face.

"I don't know. I—I had a fright a few days ago—at night—and I suppose I haven't got over it."

"A fright?"

"Yes. There was a tramp one night came to the door. I half opened it—and his face was so horrible I tried to shut it again at once. And he struggled with me, but I was strongest. Then he tried to get in at the window, but luckily I had fastened the iron bar across the shutter—and the back door. But it all held, mercifully.

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He couldn't get in. Then he abused me through the door, and said he would have killed me and the child, if he could have got in—and some day he would come again." She shuddered.

Fenwick had turned pale. With his painter's imagination he saw the thing—the bestial man outside, the winter night, the slender form within pressing against the door and the bolt—

"Look here," he said, abruptly. "We can't have this. Somebody must sleep here. Did you tell the police?"

"Yes, I wrote—to Ambleside. They sent a man over to see me. But they couldn't catch him. He's probably left the country. I got a bell"—she opened her eyes, and pointed to it. "If I rang it, they might hear it down at Brow Farm. They *might*—if the wind was that way."

There was silence a moment. Then Fenwick stooped and kissed her.

"Poor old girl!" he said, softly. She made but slight response. He returned to his place, repeating with a frowning energy—"You must have some one to sleep here."

"Daisy would come—if I'd pay her."

Daisy was their little servant of the summer, the daughter of a quarryman near by.

"Well, pay her!"

She drew herself up sharply. "I haven't got the money—and you always say, when you write, you haven't any either."

"I'll find some for that. I can't have you scared like this."

But, though his tone was vehement, it was not particularly affectionate. He was horribly discomposed in-

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deed, could not get the terrible image out of his mind. But as he went on with his supper, the shock of it mingled with a good many critical or reproachful thoughts. Why had she persisted in staying on in Langdale, instead of going to her father? All that foolish dislike of her step-mother! It had been open to her to stay in her father's farm, with plenty of company. If she wouldn't, was *he* to blame if the cottage was lonesome?

But as though she divined this secret debate she presently said:

"I went to Keswick last week."

He looked up startled. "Well?"

"Father's ill—he's got a bad chest, and the doctor says he may be going into a consumption."

"Doctors 'll say anything!" cried Fenwick, wrathfully. "If ever there was a strong man, it's your father. Don't you believe any croaking of that sort, Phœbe."

She shook her head.

"He looks so changed," she said; and began drawing with her finger on the table-cloth. He saw that her lips were trembling. A strong impulse worked in him, bidding him go to her again, kiss away her tears, and say—"Hang everything! Come with me to London, and let's sink or swim together."

Instead of which some perverse cross-current hurried him into the words:

"He'd be all right if you'd go and nurse him, Phœbe."

"No, not at all. They didn't want me—and Mrs. Gibson, poor creature, was real glad when I said I was going. She was jealous of me all the time."

"I expect you imagined that."

Phœbe's face flushed angrily.

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"I didn't!" she said, shortly. "Everybody in the house knew it."

The meal went on rather silently. Fenwick's conscience said to him, "Take her back with you!—whatever happens, take her to London—she's moping her life out here." And an inner voice clamored in reply—"Take her to those rooms?—in the very middle of the struggle with those two pictures?—go through all the agitation and discomfort of explanations with Lord Findon and Madame de Pastourelles?—run the risk of estranging them, and of distracting your own mind from your work at this critical moment?—the further risk, moreover, of Phœbe's jealousy?"

For in her present nervous and fidgety state she would very likely be jealous of his sitter, and of the way in which Madame de Pastourelles's portrait possessed his mind. No, it really couldn't be done!—it really *couldn't*! He must finish the two pictures—persuade Lord Findon to buy the "Genius Loci," and make the portrait such a success that he must needs buy that too. Then let discovery come on; it should find him steeled.

Meanwhile, Phœbe must have a servant, and not any mere slip of a girl, but some one who would be a companion and comfort. He began to talk of it, eagerly, only to find that Phœbe took but a languid interest in the idea.

She could think of no one—wanted no one, but Daisy. Again his secret ill-humor waxed and justified itself. It was unreasonable and selfish that she should not be able to think for herself and the child better; after all, he was slaving for her as much as for himself.

Meanwhile, Carrie sat very silent beside her father,

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observing him, and every now and then applying her pink lips to some morsel he held out to her on his fork. He had kissed her, and tossed her, and she was now sitting in his pocket. But after these eight months the child of four was shy and timid with this unfamiliar father. He on his side saw that she was prettier than before; his eye delighted in some of the rarer and lovelier lines of her little face; and he felt a fatherly pride. He must make some fresh studies of her; the child in the "Genius Loci" might be improved.

After supper, Phoebe seemed to him so pale and tottering that he made her rest beside the fire, while he himself cleared the supper-things away. She lay back in her chair, laughing at his awkwardness, or starting up when china clashed.

Meanwhile, as in their farewell talk beside the Ghyll eight months before, her mood gradually and insensibly changed. Whatever unloving thoughts or resentments had held her in the first hour of their meeting, however strong had been the wish to show him that she had been lonely and suffering, she could not resist what to her was the magic of his presence. As he moved about in the low, firelit room, and she watched him, her whole nature melted; and he knew it.

Presently she took the child up-stairs. He waited for her, hanging over the fire—listening to the storm outside—and thinking, thinking—

When she reappeared, and he, looking round, saw her standing in the doorway, so tall and slender, her pale face and hair colored by the glow of the fire, passion and youth spoke in him once more.

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He sprang up and caught her in his arms. Presently, sitting in the old arm-chair beside the blaze, he had gathered her on his knee, and she had clasped her hands round his neck, and buried her face against him. All things were forgotten, save that they were man and wife together, within this "wind-warm space"—ringed by night, and pattering sleet, and gusts that rushed in vain upon the roof that sheltered them.

But next morning, within the little cottage—beating rain on the windows, and a cheerless storm-light in the tiny rooms—the hard facts of the situation resumed their sway. In the first place money questions had to be faced. Fenwick made the most of his expectations; but at best they were no more, and how to live till they became certainties was the problem. If Lord Findon had commissioned the portrait, or definitely said he would purchase the "Genius Loci," some advance might have been asked for. As it was, how could money be mentioned yet awhile? Phœbe had a fine and costly piece of embroidery on hand, commissioned through an "Art Industry" started at Windermere the summer before; but it could not be finished for some weeks, possibly months, and the money Fenwick proposed to earn during his fortnight in the North by some illustrations long overdue had been already largely forestalled. He gloomily made up his mind to appeal to an old cousin in Kendal, the widow of a grocer, said to be richly left, who had once in his boyhood given him five shillings. With much distaste he wrote the letter and walked to Elterwater in the rain to post it. Then he tried to work; but little Carrie, fractious from confinement in-doors, was trouble-

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some and disturbed him. Phœbe, too, would make remarks on his drawing which seemed to him inept. In old days he would have laughed at her for pretending to know, and turned it off with a kiss. Now what she said set him on edge. The talk he had been living among had spoiled him for silly criticisms. Moreover, for the first time he detected in her a slight tone of the "school-marm"—didactic and self-satisfied, without knowledge. The measure Madame de Pastourelles had dealt out to him, he in some sort avenged on Phœbe.

At the same time there were much more serious causes of difference. Each had a secret from the other. Fenwick's secret was that he had foolishly passed in London as an unmarried man, and that he could not take Phœbe back with him, because of the discomforts and risks in which a too early avowal of her would involve him. He was morbidly conscious of this; brooded over it, and magnified it.

She on the other hand was tormented by a fixed idea—already in existence at the time of their first parting, but much strengthened by loneliness and fretting—that he was tired of her and not unwilling to be without her. The joy of their meeting banished it for a time, but it soon came back. She had never acquiesced in the wisdom of their separation; and to question it was to resent it more and more deeply—to feel his persistence in it a more cruel offence, month by month. Her pride prevented her from talking of it; but the soreness of her grievance invaded their whole relation. And in her moral unrest she showed faults which had been scarcely visible in their early married years—impatience, temper,

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suspicion, a readiness to magnify small troubles whether of health or circumstance.

During her months alone she had been reading many novels of an indifferent sort, which the carrier brought her from the lending library at Windermere. She talked excitedly of some of them, had "cried her eyes out" over this or that. Fenwick picked up one or two, and threw them away for "trash." He scornfully thought that they had done her harm, made her more nervous and difficult. But at night, when he had done his work, he never took any trouble to read to her, or to talk to her about other than household things. He smoked or drew in silence; and she sat over her embroidery, lost in morbid reverie.

One morning he discovered among her books a paper-covered *Life of Romney*—a short compilation issued by a local bookseller.

"Why, whatever did you get this for, Phœbe?" he said, holding it up.

She looked up from her mending, and colored. "I wanted to read it."

"But why?"

"Well,"—she hesitated—"I thought it was like you."

"Like me?—you little goose!"

"I don't know," she said, doggedly, looking hard at her work—"there was the hundred pounds that he got to go to London with—and then, marrying a wife in Kendal—and"—she looked up with a half-defiant smile—"and leaving her behind!"

"Oh! so you think that's like me?" he said, seating himself again at his drawing.

"It's rather like."

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"You suppose you're going to be left here for thirty years?" He laughed as he spoke.

She laughed too, but not gayly—with a kind of defiance.

"Well, it wouldn't be quite as easy now, would it?—with trains, and all that. There were only coaches then, I suppose. Now, London's so near."

"I wish you'd always think so!" he cried. "Why, of course it's near. I'm only seven hours away. What's that, in these days? And in three months' time, things will be all right and square again."

"I dare say," she said, sighing.

"Why can't you wait cheerfully?" he asked, rather exasperated—"instead of being so down."

"Because"—she broke out—"I don't see the reason of it—there! No, I don't!—However!"—she pressed back her hair from her eyes and drew herself together. "You've never shown me your studies of that—that lady—John; you said you would."

Relieved at the change of subject, he took a sketch-book out of his pocket and gave it to her. It contained a number of "notes" for his portrait of Madame de Pastourelles—sketches of various poses, aspects of the head and face, arrangements of the hands, and so forth. Phœbe pondered it in silence.

"She's pretty—I think," she said, at last, doubtfully.

"I'm not sure that she is," said Fenwick. "She's very pale."

"That doesn't matter. The shape of her face is awfully pretty—and her eyes. Is her hair like mine?"

"No, not nearly so good."

"Ah, if I could only do it as prettily as she does!"

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said Phoebe, faintly smiling. "I suppose, John, she's very smart and fashionable?"

"Well, she's Lord Findon's daughter—that tells you. They're pretty well at the top."

Phoebe asked various other questions, then fell silent, still pondering the sketches. After a while she put down her work and came to sit on a stool beside Fenwick, sometimes laying her golden head against his knee, or stretching out her hand to touch his. He responded affectionately enough; but as the winter twilight deepened in the little room, Phoebe's eyes, fixed upon the fire, resumed their melancholy discontent. She was less necessary to him even than before; she knew by a thousand small signs that the forces which possessed his mind—perhaps his heart!—were not now much concerned with her.

She tried to control, to school herself. But the flame within was not to be quenched—was, indeed, perpetually finding fresh fuel. How quietly he had taken the story of the tramp's attack upon her!—which still, whenever she thought of it, thrilled her own veins with horror. No doubt he had been over to Ambleside to speak to the police; and he had arranged that the little servant, Daisy, should come to her when he left. But if he had merely caught her to him with one shuddering cry of love and rage—that would have been worth all his precautions!—would have effaced the nightmare, and filled her heart.

As to his intellectual life, she was now much more conscious of her exclusion from it than she ever had been in their old life together.

For it was a consciousness quickened by jealousy.

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Little as Fenwick talked about Madame de Pastourelles, Phoebe understood perfectly that she was a woman of high education and refinement, and that her stored and subtle mind was at once an attraction and a cause of humiliation to John. And through his rare stories of the Findon household and the Findon dinner-parties, the wife dimly perceived a formidable world, bristling with strange acquirements and accomplishments, in which he, perhaps, was beginning to find a place, thanks to his art; while she, his obscure and ignorant wife, must resign herself to being forever shut out from it—to knowing it from his report only. How could she ever hold her own with such people? He would talk with them, paint them, dine with them, while she sat at home—Carrie's nurse, and the domestic drudge.

And yet she was of that type which represents perhaps the most ambitious element in the lower middle class. It had been a great matter that she, a small farmer's daughter, should pass her examinations and rise to be a teacher in Miss Mason's school. She had had her triumphs and conceits; had been accustomed to think herself clever and successful, to hold her head high among her school-mates. Whereas now, if she tried to talk of art or books, she was hotly aware that everything she said was, in John's eyes, pretentious or absurd. He was comparing her with others all the time, with men and women—women especially—in whose presence he felt himself as diffident as she did in his. He was thinking of ladies in velvet dresses and diamonds, who could talk wittily of pictures and theatres and books, who could amuse him and distract him. And meanwhile *she* went about in her old stuff dress, her cotton apron and

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rolled-up sleeves, cooking and washing and cleaning—for her child and for him. She felt through every nerve that he was constantly aware of details of dress or *ménage* that jarred upon him; she suspected miserably that all her little personal ways and habits seemed to him ugly and common; and the suspicion showed itself in pride or *brusquerie*.

Meanwhile, if she had been *restful*, if he could only have forgotten his cares in her mere youth and prettiness, Fenwick would have been easily master of his discontents. For he was naturally of a warm, sensuous temper. Had the woman understood her own arts, she could have held him.

But she was not restful, she was exacting and self-conscious; and, moreover, a certain new growth of Puritanism in her repelled him. While he had been passing under the transforming influences of an all-questioning thought and culture, she had been turning to Evangelical religion for consolation. There was a new minister in a Baptist chapel a mile or two away, of whom she talked, whose services she attended. The very mention of him presently became a boredom to Fenwick. The new influence had no effect upon her jealousies and discontents; but it reinforced a natural asceticism, and weakened whatever power she possessed of playing on a husband's passion. Meanwhile, Fenwick was partly aware of her state of mind, and far from happy himself. His conscience pricked him; but such prickings are small helps to love. Often he found himself guiltily brooding over Lord Findon's tirades against the early marriages of artists. There was a horrid truth in them. No doubt an artist should wait till his circum-

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stances were worthy of his gifts; and then marry a woman who could understand and help him on.

Nor was even the child a binding influence. Fenwick in this visit became for the first time a fond father. A certain magic in the little Carrie flattered his vanity and excited his hopes. He drew her many times, and prophesied confidently that she would be a beauty. But, in his secret opinion, she was spoiled and mismanaged; and he talked a good deal to Phoebe about her bringing-up, theorizing and haranguing in his usual way. Phoebe listened generally with impatience, resenting interference with her special domain. And often, when she saw the father and child together, a fresh and ugly misery would raise its head. Would he in time set even Carrie against her—teach the child to look down upon its mother?

One day he returned from Ambleside pale and excited—bringing a Manchester paper.

“Phoebe!” he called, from the gate.

Startled by something in his voice, Phoebe ran out to him.

“Phoebe, an awful thing’s happened! Old Morrison’s—dead! Look here!”

And he showed her a paragraph headed “Defalcations and suicide.” It described how Mr. James Morrison, the chief cashier of the Bartonbury Bank, had committed suicide immediately after the discovery by the bank authorities of large falsifications in the bank accounts. Mr. Morrison had shot himself, leaving a statement acknowledging a long course of fraudulent dealings with the funds intrusted to him, and pleading with his employers for his wife and daughter. “Great sympathy,”

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said the *Guardian* reporter, "is felt in Bartonbury with Mrs. Morrison, whose character has always been highly respected. But, indeed, the whole family occupied a high position, and the shock to the locality has been great." On which followed particulars of the frauds and a long report of the inquest.

Phoebe was struck with horror. She lingered over the paper, commenting, exclaiming; while Fenwick sat staring into the fire, his hands on his knees.

Presently she came to him and said in a low voice:

"And what about the money, John—the loan?"

"I am not obliged to return it in money," he said, sharply.

"Well, the pictures?"

"That 'll be all right. I must think about it. There 'll be no hurry."

"Did Mrs. Morrison know—about the loan?"

"I dare say. I never heard."

"I suppose she and the daughter 'll have nothing?"

"That doesn't follow at all. Very likely he'd settled something on them, which can't be touched. A man like that generally does."

"Poor things!" she said, shuddering. "But, John—you'll pay it back to Mrs. Morrison?"

"Of course I shall," he said, impatiently—"in due time. But please remember, Phoebe, that's my affair. Don't you talk of it—to *any one*."

He looked up to emphasize his words.

Phoebe flushed.

"I wasn't going to talk of it to any one," she said, proudly, as she moved away.

Presently he took up his hat again and went out, that

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he might be alone with his thoughts. The rain had vanished; and a frosty sunshine sparkled on the fells, on the red bracken and the foaming becks. He took the mountain-path which led past the Ghyll, up to the ridge which separates Langdale from Grasmere and Easedale. Morrison's finely wrinkled face, with its blue, complacent eyes and thin nose, hovered before him—now as he remembered it in life, and now as he imagined it in death. Hard fate! There had been an adventurous, poetic element in Morrison—something beyond the ken of the ordinary Philistine, and it had come to this. Fenwick remembered him among the drawings he had collected. Real taste—real sense of beauty—combined no doubt with the bargaining instinct and a natural love of chicanery. Moreover, Fenwick believed that, so far as a grasping temper would allow, there had been a genuine wish to help undiscovered talent. He thought of the hand which had given him the check, and had a vision of it holding the revolver—of the ghastly, solitary end. And no one had guessed—unless, indeed, it were his wife. Perhaps that look of hers—as of a creature hunted by secret fears—was now explained.

How common such things are!—and probably, so ran his thoughts, will always be. We are all acting. Each man, or woman, carries this potentiality of a double life—it is only a question of less or more.

Suddenly he colored, as he saw *himself* thus writ double—first as he appeared to Madame de Pastourelles, and then as he appeared to Phoebe. Masquerading was easy, it seemed; and conscience made little fuss! Instantly, however, the inner man rebelled against the implied comparison of himself with Morrison. An acci-

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dental concealment, acquiesced in temporarily, for business reasons—what had that in common with villany like Morrison's? An awkward affair, no doubt; and he had been a fool to slip into it. But in a few weeks he would put it right—come what would.

As to the debt—he tried to fight against a feeling of deliverance—but clearly he need be in no hurry to pay it. He had been living in dread of Morrison's appearing in Bernard Street to claim his bond—revealing Phoebe's existence perhaps to ears unprepared—and laying greedy hands upon the "Genius Loci." It would have been hard to keep him off it—unless Lord Findon had promptly come forward—and it would have been odious to yield it to him. "Now I shall take my time." Of course, ultimately, he would repay the money to Mrs. Morrison and Bella. But better, even in their interests, to wait awhile, till there could be no question of any other claim to it.

So from horror he passed to a personal relief, of which he was rather ashamed, and then again to a real uneasy pity for the wife and for the vulgar daughter who had so bitterly resented his handling of her charms. He remembered the note in which she had acknowledged the final delivery of her portrait. In obedience to Morrison's suggestion, he had kept it by him a few days; and then, either unable or proudly unwilling to alter it, he had returned it to its owner. Whereupon a furious note from Miss Bella, which—knowing that her father took no account of her tempers—Fenwick had torn up with a laugh. It was clear that she had heard of her father's invitation to him to "beautify" it, and when the picture reappeared unaltered she took it as a direct and personal insult—a sign that he disliked her and meant to humil-

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iate her. It was an odd variety of the *spretæ injuria formæ*. Fenwick had never been in the least penitent for his behavior. The picture was true, clever—and the best he could do. It was no painter's business to endow Miss Bella with beauty, if she did not possess it. As a piece of paint, the picture *had* beauty—if she had only eyes to find it out.

Poor girl!—what husband now would venture on such a termagant wife?—penniless too, and disgraced! He would like to help her, and her mother—for Morrison's sake. Stirred by a fleeting impulse, he began to scheme how he might become their benefactor, as Morrison had been his.

Then, as he raised his eyes from the path—with a rush of delight he noticed the flood of afternoon sunlight pouring on the steep fell-side, the sharp black shadows thrown by wall and tree, the brilliance of the snow along the top-most ridge. He raced along, casting the Morrisons out of his thoughts, forgetting everything but the joy of atmosphere and light—the pleasure of his physical strength. Near one of the highest crags he came upon a shepherd-boy and his dog collecting some sheep. The collie ran hither and thither with the marvellous shrewdness of his breed, circling, heading, driving; the stampede of the sheep, as they fled before him, could be heard along the fell. The sun played upon the flock, turning its dirty gray to white, caught the little figure of the shepherd-boy, as he stood shouting and waving, or glittered on the foaming stream beside him. Purple shadows bathed the fell beyond—and on its bosom the rustic scene emerged—a winter idyl.

Fenwick sat down upon a rock, ransacked his pockets

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for sketch-book and paints, and began to sketch. When he had made his "note," he sat lost awhile in the pleasure of his own growing skill and sharpening perceptions, and dreaming of future "subjects." A series of "Westmoreland months," illustrating the seasons among the fells and the life of the dalesmen, ran through his mind. Nature appeared to his exultant sense as a vast treasure-house stored for him only—a mine inexhaustible offered to his craftsman's hand. For him the sweeping hues, the intricate broideries—green or russet, red or purple—of this winter world!—for him the delicacy of the snow, the pale azure of the sky, the cloud-shadows, the white beck, the winding river in the valley floor, the purple crags, the lovely accents of light and shade, the hints of composition that wooed his eager eye. Who was it that said "Composition is the art of preserving the accidental look"? Clever fellow!—there was the right thing said, for once! And so he slipped into a reverie, which was really one of those moments—plastic and fruitful—by which the artist makes good his kinship with "the great of old," his right to his own place in the unending chain.

Strange!—from that poverty of feeling in which he had considered the Morrison tragedy—from his growing barrenness of heart towards Phœbe—he had sprung at a bound into this ecstasy, this expansion of the whole man. It brought with it a vivid memory of the pictures he was engaged upon. By the time he turned homeward, and the light was failing, he was counting the days till he could return to London—and to work.

There was still, however, another week of his holiday to run. He wrote to Mrs. Morrison a letter which cost

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him much pains, expressing a sympathy that he really felt. He got on with his illustration work, and extracted a further advance upon it. And the old cousin in Kendal proved unexpectedly generous. She wrote him a long Scriptural letter, rating him for disobedience to his father, and warning him against debt; but she lent him twenty pounds, so that, for the present, Phoebe could be left in comparative comfort, and he had something in his pocket.

Yet with this easing of circumstance, the relation between husband and wife did not improve. During this last week, indeed, Phoebe teased him to make a sketch of himself to leave with her. He began it unwillingly, then got interested, and finally made a vigorous sketch, as ample as their largest looking-glass would allow, with which he was extremely pleased. Phoebe delighted in it, hung it up proudly in the parlor, and repayed him with smiles and kisses.

Yet the very next day, under the cloud of his impending departure, she went about pale and woe-begone, on the verge of tears or temper. He was provoked into various harsh speeches, and Phoebe felt that despair which weak and loving women know, when parting is near, and they foresee the hour beyond parting—when each unkind word and look, too well remembered, will gnaw and creep about the heart.

But she could not restrain herself. Nervous tension, doubt of her husband, and condemnation of herself drove her on. The very last night there was a quarrel—about the child—whom Fenwick had punished for some small offence. Phoebe hotly defended her—first with tears, then with passion. For the first time these two people found

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themselves looking into each other's eyes with rage, almost with hate. Then they kissed and made up, terrified at the abyss which had yawned between them; and when the moment came, Phoebe went through the parting bravely.

But when Fenwick had gone, and the young wife sat alone beside the cottage fire, the January darkness outside seemed to her the natural symbol of her own bitter foreboding. Why had he left her? There was no reason in it, as she had said. But there must be some reason behind it. And slowly, in the fire-light, she fell to brooding over the image of that pale classical face, as she had seen it in the sketch-book. John had talked quite frankly about Madame de Pastourelles—not like a man beguiled; making no mystery of her at all, answering all questions. But his restlessness to get back to London had been extraordinary. Was it merely the restlessness of the artist?

This was Tuesday. To-morrow Madame de Pastourelles was to come to a sitting. Phoebe sat picturing it; while the curtain of rain descended once more upon the cottage, blotting out the pikes, and washing down the sodden fields.

VI

"I MUST alter that fold over the arm," murmured Fenwick, stepping back, with a frown, and gazing hard at the picture on his easel—"it's too strong."

Madame de Pastourelles gave a little shiver.

The big bare room, with its Northern aspect and its smouldering fire, had been of a polar temperature this March afternoon. She had been sitting for an hour and a half. Her hands and feet were frozen, and the fur cloak which she wore over her white dress had to be thrown back for the convenience of the painter, who was at work on the velvet folds.

Meanwhile, on the farther side of the room sat "propriety"—also shivering—an elderly governess of the Findon family, busily knitting.

"The dress is coming!" said Fenwick, after another minute or two. "Yes, it's coming."

And with a flushed face and dishevelled hair he stood back again, staring first at his canvas and then at his sitter.

Madame de Pastourelles sat as still as she could, her thin, numbed fingers lightly crossed on her lap. Her wonderful velvet dress, of ivory-white, fell about her austere in long folds, which, as they bent or overlapped, made beautiful convolutions, firm yet subtle, on the side turned towards the painter, and over her feet.

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The classical head, with its small ear, the pale yet shining face, combined with the dress to suggest a study in ivory, wrought to a great delicacy and purity. Only the eyes, much darker than the hair, and the rich brown of the sable cloak where it touched the white, gave accent and force to the ethereal pallor, the supreme refinement, of the rest—face, dress, hands. Nothing but civilization in its most complex workings could have produced such a type; that was what prevailed dimly in Fenwick's mind as he wrestled with his picture. Sometimes his day's work left him exultant, sometimes in a hell of despair.

"I went to see Mr. Welby's studio yesterday," he said, hastily, after another minute or two, seeing her droop with fatigue.

Her face changed and lit up.

"Well, what did you see?"

"The two Academy pictures—several portraits—and a lot of studies."

"Isn't it fine—the 'Polyxena'?"

Fenwick twisted his mouth in a trick he had.

"Yes," he said, perfunctorily.

She colored slightly, as though in antagonism.

"That means that you don't admire it at all."

"Well, it doesn't say anything to me," said Fenwick, after a pause.

"What do you dislike?"

"Why doesn't he paint flesh?" he said, abruptly—"not colored wax."

"Of course there is a decorative convention in his painting"—her tone was a little stiff—"but so there is in all painting."



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Fenwick shrugged his shoulders.

"Go and look at Rubens—or Velasquez."

"Why not at Leonardo—and Raphael?"

"Because they are not *moderns*—and we can't get back into their skins. Rubens and Velasquez *are* moderns," he protested, stoutly.

"What is a 'modern'?" she asked, laughing. It was on the tip of his tongue to say, "You are—and it is only fashion—or something else—that makes you like this archaistic stuff!" But he restrained himself, and they fell into a skirmish, in which, as usual, he came off badly. As soon as he perceived it, he became rather heated and noisy, trying to talk her down. Whereupon she sprang up, came down from her pedestal to look at the picture, called mademoiselle to see—praised—laughed—and all was calm again. Only Fenwick was left once more reflecting that she was Welby's champion through thick and thin. And this ruffled him.

"Did Mr. Welby study mostly in Italy?" he asked her presently, as he fetched a hand-glass, in which to examine his morning's work.

"Mostly—but also in Vienna."

And, to keep the ball rolling, she described a travel-year—apparently before her marriage—which she, Lord Findon, a girl friend of hers, and Welby had spent abroad together—mainly in Rome, Munich, and Vienna—for the purpose, it seemed, of Welby's studies. The experiences she described roused a kind of secret exasperation in Fenwick. And what was really resentment against the meagreness of his own lot showed itself, as usual, in jealousy. He said something contemptuous of this foreign training for an artist—so much concerned

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with galleries and Old Masters. Much better that he should use his eyes upon his own country and its types; that had been enough for all the best men.

Madame de Pastourelles politely disagreed with him; then, to change the subject, she talked of some of the humors and incidents of their stay in Vienna—the types of Viennese society—the Emperor, the beautiful mad Empress, the Archdukes, the priests—and also of some hurried visits to Hungarian country houses in winter, of the cosmopolitan luxury and refinement to be found there, ringed by forests and barbarism.

Fenwick listened greedily, and presently inquired whether Mr. Welby had shared in all these amusements.

"Oh yes. He was generally the life and soul of them."

"I suppose he made lots of friends—and got on with everybody?"

Madame de Pastourelles assented—cautiously.

"That's all a question of manners," said Fenwick, with sudden roughness.

She gave a vague "Perhaps"—and he straightened himself aggressively.

"I don't think manners very important, do you?"

"Very!" She said it, with a gay firmness.

"Well, then, some of us will never get any," his tone was surly—"we weren't taught young enough."

"Our mothers teach us generally—all that's wanted!"

He shook his head.

"It's not as simple as that. Besides—one may lose one's mother."

"Ah, yes!" she said, with quick feeling. And presently a little tact, a few questions on her part had brought

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out some of his own early history—his mother's death—his years of struggle with his father. As he talked on—disjointedly—painting hard all the time, she had a vision of the Kendal shop and its customers—of the shrewd old father, moulded by the business, the avarice, the religion of an English country town, with a Calvinist contempt for art and artists—and trying vainly to coerce his sulky and rebellious son.

"Has your father seen these pictures?" She pointed to the "Genius Loci" on its farther easel—and to the portrait.

"My father! I haven't spoken to him or seen him for years."

"Years!" She opened her eyes. "Is it as bad as that?"

"Ay, that's North Country. If you've once committed yourself, you stick to it—like death."

She declared that it might be North Country, but was none the less barbarous. However, of course it would all come right. All the interesting tales of one's childhood began that way—with a cruel father, and a rebellious son. But they came to magnificent ends, notwithstanding—with sacks of gold and a princess. Diffident, yet smiling, she drew conclusions. "So, you see, you'll make money—you'll be an R.A.—you'll *marry*—and Mr. Fenwick will nurse the grandchildren. I assure you—that's the fairy-tale way."

Fenwick, who had flushed hotly, turned away and occupied himself in replenishing his palette.

"Papa, of course, would say—Don't marry till you're a hundred and two!" she resumed. "But pray, don't listen to him."

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"I dare say he's right," said Fenwick, returning to his easel, his face bent over it.

"Not at all. People should have their youth together."

"That's all very well. But many men don't know at twenty what they'll want at thirty," said Fenwick, painting fast.

Madame de Pastourelles laughed.

"The doctors say nowadays—it is papa's latest craze—that it doesn't matter what you eat—or how little—if you only chew it properly. I wonder if that applies to matrimony?"

"What's the chewing?"

"Manners," she said, laughing—"that you think so little of. Whether the food's agreeable or not, manners help it down."

"Manners!—between husband and wife?" he said, scornfully.

"But certainly!" She lifted her beautiful brows for emphasis. "Show me any persons, please, that want them more!"

"The people I've been living among," said Fenwick, with sharp persistence, "haven't got time for fussing about manners—in the sense you mean. Life's too hard."

A flush of bright color sprang into her face. But she held her ground.

"What do you suppose I mean? I don't mean court trains and courtesies—I really don't."

Fenwick was silent a moment, and then said—aggressively—"We can't all of us have the same chances—as Mr. Welby, for instance."

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Madame de Pastourelles looked at him in astonishment. What an extraordinary obsession! They seemed not to be able to escape from Arthur Welby's name: yet it never cropped up without producing some sign of irritation in this strange young man. Poor Arthur!—who had always shown himself so ready to make friends, whenever the two men met—as they often did—in the St. James's Square drawing-room. Fenwick's antagonism, indeed, had been plain to her for some time. It was natural, she supposed; he was clearly very sensitive on the subject of his own humble origin and bringing-up; but she sighed that a perverse youth should so mismanage his opportunities.

As to "chances," she declared rather tartly that they had nothing to do with it. It was natural to Arthur Welby to make himself agreeable.

"Yes—like all other kinds of aristocrats," said Fenwick, grimly.

Madame de Pastourelles frowned. "Of all the words in the dictionary—that word is the most detestable!" she declared. "It ought to be banished. Well, thank goodness, it *is* generally banished."

"That's only because we all like to hide our heads in the sand—you who possess the privileges—and we who envy them!"

"I vow I don't possess any privileges at all," she said, with defiance.

"You say so, because you breathe them—live in them—like the air—without knowing it," said Fenwick, also trying to speak lightly. Then he added, suddenly putting down his palette and brushes, while his black eyes lightened—"And so does Mr. Welby. You can see from

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his pictures that he doesn't know anything about common, coarse people—*real* people—who make up the world. He paints wax, and calls it life; and you—"

"Go on!—*please* go on!"

"I shall only make a fool of myself," he said, taking up his brushes again.

"Not at all. And I praise humbug?—and call it manners?"

He paused, then blurted out—"I wouldn't say anything rude to you for the world!"

She smiled—a smile that turned all the delicate severity of her face to sweetness. "That's very nice of you. But if you knew Mr. Welby better, you'd never want to say anything rude to *him* either!"

Fenwick was silent. Madame de Pastourelles, feeling that for the moment she also had come to the end of her tether, fell into a reverie, from which she was presently roused by finding Fenwick standing before her, palette in hand.

"I don't want you to think me an envious brute," he said, stammering. "Of course, I know the 'Polyxena' is a fine thing—a very fine thing."

She looked a little surprised—as though he offered her moods to which she had no key. "Shall I show you something I like much better?" she said, with quick resource. And drawing towards her a small portfolio she had brought with her, she took out a drawing and handed it to him. "I am taking it to be framed. Isn't it beautiful?"

It was a drawing, in silver-point, of an orange-tree in mingled fruit and bloom—an exquisite piece of work, of a Japanese truth, intricacy, and perfection. Fenwick

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looked at it in silence. These silver-point drawings of Welby's were already famous. In the preceding May there had been an exhibition of them at an artistic club. At the top of the drawing was an inscription in a minute handwriting—"Sorrento: Christmas Day," with the monogram "A. W." and a date three years old.

As Madame de Pastourelles perceived that his eye had caught the inscription, she rather hastily withdrew the sketch and returned it to the portfolio.

"I watched him draw it," she explained—"in a Sorrento garden. My father and I were there for the winter. Mr. Welby was in a villa near ours, and I used to watch him at work."

It seemed to Fenwick that her tone had grown rather hurried and reserved, as though she regretted the impulse which had made her show him the drawing. He praised it as intelligently as he could; but his mind was guessing all the time at the relation which lay behind the drawing. According to Cuninghams's information, it was now three years since a separation had been arranged between Madame de Pastourelles and her husband, Comte Albert de Pastourelles, owing to the Comte's outrageous misconduct. Lord Findon had no doubt taken her abroad after the catastrophe. And, besides her father, Welby had also been near, apparently—watching over her?

He returned to his work upon the hands, silent, but full of speculation. The evident bond between these two people had excited his imagination and piqued his curiosity from the first moment of his acquaintance with them. They were both of a rare and fine quality; and the signs of an affection between them, equally rare and

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fine, had not been lost on those subtler perceptions in Fenwick which belonged perhaps to his heritage as an artist. If he gave the matter an innocent interpretation, and did not merely say to himself, "She has lost a husband and found a lover," it was because the woman herself had awakened in him fresh sources of judgment. His thoughts simply did not dare besmirch her.

The clock struck five; and thereupon a sound of voices on the stairs outside.

"Papa!" said Madame de Pastourelles, jumping up—in very evident relief—her teeth chattering.

The door opened and Lord Findon put in a reconnoitring head.

"May I—or we—come in?"

And behind him, on the landing, Fenwick with a start perceived the smiling face of Arthur Welby.

"I've come to carry off my daughter," said Findon, with a friendly nod to the artist. "But don't let us in if you don't want to."

"Turn me out please, at once, if I'm in the way," said Welby. "Lord Findon made me come up."

It was the first time that Welby had visited the Bernard Street studio. Fenwick's conceit had sometimes resented the fact. Yet now that Welby was there he was unwilling to show his work. He muttered something about there being "more to see in a day or two."

"There's a great deal to see already," said Lord Findon. "But, of course, do as you like. Eugénie, are you ready?"

"Please!—may I be exhibited?" said Madame de Pastourelles to Fenwick, with a smiling appeal.

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He gave way, dragged the easel into the best light, and fell back while the two men examined the portrait.

"Stay where you are, Eugénie," said Lord Findon, holding up his hand. "Let Arthur see the pose."

She sat down obediently. Fenwick heard an exclamation from Welby, and a murmured remark to Lord Findon; then Welby turned to the painter, his face aglow.

"I say, I do congratulate you! You *are* making a success of it! The whole scheme's delightful. You've got the head admirably."

"I'm glad you like it," said Fenwick, rather shortly, ready at once to suspect a note of patronage in the other's effusion. Welby—a little checked—returned to the picture, studying it closely, and making a number of shrewd, or generous comments upon it, gradually quenched, however, by Fenwick's touchy or ungracious silence. Of course the picture was good. Fenwick wanted no one to tell him that.

Meanwhile, Lord Findon—though in Fenwick's studio he always behaved himself with a certain jauntiness, as a man should who has discovered a genius—was a little discontented.

"It's a fine thing, Eugénie," he was saying to her, as he helped her put on her furs, "but I'm not altogether satisfied. It wants animation. It's too—too—"

"Too sad?" she asked, quietly.

"Too grave, my dear—too grave. I want your smile."

Madame de Pastourelles shook her head.

"What do you mean?" he asked.

"I can't go smiling to posterity!" she said; first gayly—then suddenly her lip quivered.

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"Eugénie, darling—for God's sake—"

"I'm all right," she said, recovering herself instantly.

"Mr. Arthur, are you coming?"

"One moment," said Welby; then, turning to Fenwick as the others approached them, he said, "Might I make two small criticisms?"

"Of course."

"The right hand seems to me too large—and the chin wants fining. Look!" He took a little ivory paper-cutter from his pocket, and pointed to the line of the chin, with a motion of the head towards Madame de Pastourelles.

Fenwick looked—and said nothing.

"By George, I think he's right," said Lord Findon, putting on spectacles. "That right hand's certainly too big."

"In my opinion, it's not big enough," said Fenwick, doggedly.

Welby withdrew instantly from the picture, and took up his hat. Lord Findon looked at the artist—half angry, half amused. "You don't buy her gloves, sir—I do."

Eugénie's eyes meanwhile had begun to sparkle, as she stood in her sable cap and cloak, waiting for her companions. Fenwick approached her.

"Will you sit to-morrow?"

"I think not—I have some engagements."

"Next day?"

"I will let you know."

Fenwick's color rose.

"There is a good deal to do still—and I must work at my other picture."

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"Yes, I know. I will write."

And with a little dry nod of farewell she slipped her hand into her father's arm and led him away. Welby also saluted pleasantly, and followed the others.

Fenwick was left to pace his room in a tempest, denouncing himself as a "damned fool," bent on destroying all his own chances in life. Why was it that Welby's presence always had this effect upon him—setting him on edge, and making a bear of him? No!—it was not allowed to be so handsome, so able, so ingratiating. Yet he knew very well that Welby made no enemies, and that in his grudging jealousy of a delightful artist he, Fenwick, stood alone.

He walked to the window. Yes, there they were, all three—Mademoiselle Barras seemed to have gone her ways separately—just disappearing into Russell Square. He saw that Welby had possessed himself of the fair lady's portfolio, and was carrying her shawl. He watched their intimate, laughing ways—how different from the stiffness she had just shown *him*—from the friendly, yet distant relations she always maintained between herself and her painter! A fierce and irritable ambition swept through him—rebellion against the hampering conditions of birth and poverty, which he felt as so many chains upon body and soul. Why was he born the son of a small country tradesman, narrow, ignorant, and tyrannical?—harassed by penury, denied opportunities—while a man like Welby found life from the beginning a broad road, as it were, down a widening valley, to a land of abundance and delight?

But the question led immediately to an answering out-

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burst of vanity. He paced up and down, turning from the injustice of the past to challenge the future. A few more years, and the world would know where to place *him*—with regard to the men now in the running—men with half his power—Welby and the like. A mad arrogance, a boundless confidence in himself flamed through all his veins. Let him paint, paint, *paint*—think of nothing, care for nothing but the maturing of his gift!

How long he lost himself in this passion of egotism and defiance he hardly knew. He was roused from it by the servant bringing a lamp; and as she set it down, the light fell upon a memorandum scrawled on the edge of a sketch which was lying on the table: "Feb. 21—10 o'clock."

His mood collapsed. He sat down by the dying fire, brooding and miserable. How on earth was he going to get through the next few weeks? Abominable!—thoughtlessly cruel!—that neither Lord Findon nor Madame de Pastourelles should ever yet have spoken to him of money! These months of work on the portrait—this constant assumption on the part of the Findon circle that both the portrait and the "Genius Loci" were to become Findon possessions—and yet no sum named—no clear agreement even—nothing, as it seemed to Fenwick's suspicious temper, in either case, that really bound Lord Findon. "Write to the old boy"—so Cuninghame had advised again and again—"get something definite out of him." But Fenwick had once or twice torn up a letter of the kind in morbid pride and despair. Suppose he were rebuffed? That would be an end of the Findon connection, and he could not bring himself to face it. He must keep his *entrée*

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to the house; above all, he clung to the portrait and the sittings.

But the immediate outlook was pretty dark. He was beginning to be pestered with debts and duns—the appointment on the morrow was with an old frame-maker who had lent him twenty pounds before Christmas, and was now begging piteously for his money. There was nothing to pay him with—nothing to send Phœbe, in spite of a constant labor at paying jobs in black-and-white that often kept him up till three or four in the morning. He wondered whether Watson would help him with a loan. According to Cuninghame, the queer fellow had private means.

The fact was he was overstrained—he knew it. The year had been the hardest of his life, and now that he was approaching the time of crisis—the completion of his two pictures, the judgment of the Academy and the public, his nerve seemed to be giving way. As he thought of all that success or failure might mean, he plunged into a melancholy no less extravagant than the passion of self-confidence from which he had emerged. Suppose that he fell ill before the pictures were finished—what would become of Phœbe and the child?

As he thought of Phœbe, suddenly his heart melted within him. Was she, too, hating the hours? As he bowed his head on his arms a few hot, unwilling tears forced themselves into his eyes. Had he been unkind and harsh to her?—his poor little Phœbe! An imperious impulse seemed to sweep him back into her arms. She was his own, his very own; one flesh with him; of the same clay, the same class, the same customs and ideals. Let him only recover her, and his child—and live his

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own life as he pleased. No more dependence on the moods of fine people. He hated them all! Clearly he had offended Madame de Pastourelles. Perhaps she would not sit again—the portrait would be thrown on his hands—because he had not behaved with proper deference to her spoiled and petted favorite.

Involuntarily he looked up. The lamp-light fell on the portrait.

There she sat, the delicate, ethereal being, her gentle brow bent forward, her eyes fixed upon him. He perceived, as though for the first time, what an image of melancholy grace it was, which he had built up there. He had done it, as it were, without knowing—had painted something infinitely pathetic and noble without realizing it in the doing.

As he looked, his irritation died away, and something wholly contradictory took its place. He felt a rush of self-pity, and then of trust. What if he called on her to help him—unveiled himself to this kind and charming woman—confessed to her his remorse about Phoebe—his secret miseries and anxieties—the bitterness of his envies and ambitions? Would she not rain balm upon him—quiet him—guide him?

He yearned towards her, as he sat there in the semi-darkness—seeking the *ewig-weibliche* in the sweetness of her face—without a touch of passion—as a Catholic might yearn towards his Madonna. Her slight and haughty farewell showed that he had tried her patience—had behaved like an ungenerous cur. But he must and would propitiate her—win her friendship for himself and Phoebe. The weakness of the man threw itself strangely, instinctively, on the moral strength of the

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woman; as though in this still young and winning creature he might recover something of what he had lost in childhood, when his mother died. He mocked at his own paradox, but it held him. That very night would he write to her; not yet about Phœbe—not yet!—but letting her understand, at least, that he was *not* ungrateful, that he valued her sympathy and good-will. Already the phrases of the letter, warm and eloquent, yet restrained, began to flow through his mind. It might be an unusual thing to do; but she was no silly conventional woman; she would understand.

By Jove! Welby was perfectly right. The hand was too big. It should be altered at the next sitting. Then he sprang up, found pen and paper, and began to write to Phœbe—still in the same softened and agitated state. He wrote in haste and at length, satisfying some hungry instinct in himself by the phrases of endearment which he scattered plentifully through the letter.

That letter found Phœbe on a mid-March morning, when the thrushes were beginning to sing, when the larches were reddening, and only in the topmost hollows of the Pikes did any snow remain, to catch the strengthening sunlight.

As she opened it, she looked at its length with astonishment. Then the tone of it brought the rushing color to her cheek, and when it was finished she kissed it and hid it in her dress. After weeks of barrenness, of stray post-cards and perfunctory notes, these ample pages, with their rhetorical and sentimental effusion, brought new life to the fretting, lonely woman. She went about in penitence. Surely she had done injustice to her John;

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and she dreaded lest any inkling of those foolish or morbid thoughts she had been harboring should ever reach him.

She wrote back with passion—like one throwing herself on his breast. The letter was long and incoherent, written at night beside Carrie's bed—and borrowing much, unconsciously, from the phraseology of the novels she still got from Bowness. Alack! it is to be feared that John Fenwick—already at another point in spiritual space when the letter reached him—gave it but a hasty reading.

But, for the time, it was an untold relief to the writer. Afterwards, she settled down to wait again, working meanwhile night and day at her beautiful embroidery that John had designed for her. Miss Anna came to see her, exclaimed at her frail looks, wanted to lend her money. Phoebe in a new exaltation, counting the weeks, and having still three or four sovereigns in the drawer, refused—would say nothing about their straits. John, she declared, was on the eve of an *enormous* success. It would be all right presently.

Weeks passed. The joy of that one golden letter faded; and gradually the shadows re-closed about her. Fenwick's letters dwindled again to post-cards, and then almost ceased. When the hurried lines came, the strain and harass expressed in them left no room for affection. Something wrong with the "Genius Loci"!—some bad paints—hours of work needed to get the beastly thing right—the portrait still far from complete—but the dress would be a *marvel*!—without quenching the head in the least. And not a loving word!—scarcely an inquiry after the child.

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April came. The little shop in the neighboring village gave Mrs. Fenwick credit—but Phœbe, brought up in frugal ways, to loathe the least stain of debt, hated to claim it, and went there in the dusk, that she might not be seen.

Meanwhile not a line from John to tell her that his pictures had gone in to the Academy. She saw a paragraph, however, in the local papers describing "Show Sunday." Had John been entertaining smart people to tea, and showing his pictures, with the rest? If so, couldn't he find ten minutes in which to send her news of it? It *was* unkind! All her suspicions and despair revived. As she carried her child back from the village, tottering often under the weight, gusts of mingled weakness and passion would sweep over her. She would not be treated so—John should see! She would get her money for her work and go to London—whether he liked it or no—tax him with his indifference to her—find out what he was really doing.

The capacity for these moments of violence was something new in her—probably depending, if the truth were known, on some obscure physical misery. She felt that they degraded her, yet could not curb them.

And, in this state, the obsession of the winter seized her again. She brooded perpetually over the doleful Romney story—the tale of a great painter, born, like her John, in this Northern air, and reared in Kendal streets, deserting his peasant wife—enslaved by Emma Hamilton through many a passionate year—and coming back at last that the drudge of his youth might nurse him through his decrepit old age. She remembered going with John in their sweetheart days to see the house

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where Romney died, imbecile and paralyzed, with Mary Romney beside him.

"I would never have done it—*never!*" she said to herself in a mad recoil. "He had chosen—he should have paid!"

She sat closer and closer at her work, in a feverish eagerness to finish it, sleeping little and eating little. When she wrote to her husband it was in a bitter, reproachful tone she had never yet employed to him. "I have had one nice letter from you this winter, and only one. As you can't take the trouble to write any more, you'll hardly wonder if I think you sent that one to keep me quiet." She wrote too often in this style. But, whether in this style or another, John made no answer—had apparently ceased to write.

One afternoon towards the end of April she was sitting at her work in the parlor, with the window open to the lengthening day, when she heard the gate open and shut. A woman in black came up the pathway, and, seeing Phoebe at the window, stopped short. Phoebe rose, and, as the visitor threw back her veil, recognized the face of Mr. Morrison's daughter, Bella.

She gave a slight cry; then, full of pity and emotion, she hastened to open the door.

"Oh, Miss Morrison!" She held out her hand; her attitude, her beautiful eyes, breathed compassion, and also embarrassment. The thought of the debt rushed into her mind. Had Miss Morrison come to press for it? It was within a fortnight of twelve months since the loan was granted. She felt a vague terror.

The visitor just touched her hand, then looked at her with an expression which stirred increasing alarm in the

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woman before her. It was so hard and cold; it threatened, without speech.

"I came to return you something I don't want any more," said the girl, with a defiant air; and Phoebe noticed, as she spoke, that she carried in her left hand a large, paper-covered roll. In her deep black she was more startling than ever, with spots of flame-color on either cheek, the eyes fixed and staring, the lips wine-red. It might have been a face taken from one of those groups of crudely painted wood or terra-cotta, in which northern Italy—as at Orta or Varallo—has expressed the scenes of the Passion. The Magdalen in one of the ruder groups might have looked so.

"Will you please to come in?" said Phoebe, leading the way to the parlor, which smelled musty and damp for lack of fire, and was still littered with old canvases, studies, casts, and other gear of the painter who had once used it as his studio.

Bella Morrison came in, but she refused a chair.

"There's no call for me to stay," she said, sharply. "You won't like what I came to do—I know that."

Phoebe looked at her, bewildered.

"I've brought back that picture of me your husband painted," said the girl, putting down her parcel on the table. "It's in there."

"What have you done that for?" said Phoebe, wondering.

"Because I loathe it—and all my friends loathe it, too. Papa—"

"Oh! do tell me—how is Mrs. Morrison?" cried Phoebe, stepping forward, her whole aspect quivering with painful pity.

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"She's all right," said Bella, looking away. "We're going to live in Guernsey. We're selling this house. It's hers, of course. Papa settled it on her, years before—"

She stopped—then drew herself together.

"So, you see, I got that picture out of mother. I've never forgiven Mr. Fenwick for taking it home, saying he'd improve it, and then sending it back as bad as ever. I knew he'd done that to spite me—he'd disliked me from the first."

"John never painted a portrait to spite anybody in his life," cried Phœbe. "I never heard such nonsense."

"Well, anyway, he can take it back," said the girl. "Mother wouldn't let me destroy it, but she said I might give it back; so there it is. We kept the frame—that's decent—that might do for something else."

Phœbe's eyes flashed.

"Thank you, Miss Morrison. It would, indeed, be a great pity to waste my husband's work on some one who couldn't appreciate it." She took the roll and stood with her hand upon it, protecting it. "I'll tell him what you've done."

"Oh, then, you do know where he is!" said Bella, with a laugh.

"What do you mean?"

"What I say." The eyes of the two women met across the table. A flash of cruelty showed itself in those of the girl. "I thought, perhaps, you mightn't—as he's been passing in London for an unmarried man."

There was a pause—a moment's dead silence.

"That, of course, is a lie!" said Phœbe at last, drawing in her breath—and then, restraining herself, "or else a silly mistake."

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"It's no mistake at all," said Bella, with a toss of the head. "I thought you ought to know, and mother agreed with me. The men are all alike. There's a letter I got the other day from a friend of mine."

She drew a letter from a stringbag on her wrist, and handed it to Phœbe.

Phœbe made no motion to take it. She stood rigid, her fierce, still look fixed on her visitor.

"You'd better," said Bella; "I declare you'd better. If my husband had been behaving like this, I should want to know the truth—and pay him out."

Phœbe took the letter, opened it with steady fingers, and read it. While she was reading it the baby Carrie, escaped from the little servant's tutelage, ran in and hid her face in her mother's skirts, peering sometimes at the stranger.

When she had finished the letter, Phœbe handed it back to its owner.

"Who wrote that?"

"A friend of mine who's working at South Kensington. You can see—she knows a lot about artists."

"And what she doesn't know she makes up," said Phœbe, with slow contempt. "You tell her, Miss Morrison, from me, she might be better employed than writing nasty, lying gossip about people she never saw."

She caught up her child, who flung her arms round her mother's neck, nestling on her shoulder.

"Oh, well, if you're going to take it like that—" said the other, with a laugh.

"I *am* taking it like that, you see," said Phœbe, walking to the door and throwing it wide. "You'd better go, Miss Morrison. I am sure I can't imagine why you came."

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I should have thought you'd have had sorrow enough of your own, without trying to make it for other people."

The other winced.

"Well, of course, if you don't want to know the truth, you needn't."

Phœbe laughed.

"It isn't truth," she said. "But if it was— Did you want to know the truth about your father?" Her white face, encircled by the child's arms, quivered as she spoke.

"Don't you abuse my father," cried Bella, furiously.

Phœbe's eyes wavered and fell.

"I wasn't going to abuse him," she said, in a choked voice. "I was sorry for him—and for your mother. But *you've* got a hard, wicked heart—and I hope I'll never see you again, Miss Morrison. I'll thank you, please, to leave my house."

The other drew down her veil with an affected smile and shrug. "Good-bye, Mrs. Fenwick. Perhaps you'll find out before long that my friend wasn't such a fool to write that letter—and I wasn't such a beast to tell you—as you think now. Good-bye!"

Phœbe said nothing. The girl passed her insolently, and left the house.

Phœbe put the child to bed, sat without touching a morsel while Daisy supped, and then shut herself into the parlor, saying that she was going to sit up over her work, to which only a few last touches were wanting. It had been her intention to go with the carrier to Windermere the following day in order to hand it over to the shop who had got her the commission, and ask for payment.

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But as soon as she was alone in the room, with her lamp and her work, she swept its silken, many-colored mass aside, found a sheet of paper, and began to write.

She was trying to write down, as nearly as she could remember, the words of the letter which Bella had shown her.

"Didn't you tell me about a man called John Fenwick, who painted your portrait?—a beastly thing you couldn't abide? Well, they say he's going to be awfully famous soon, and make a pile of money. I don't know him, but I have a friend who knows one of the two men who used to lodge in the same house with him—I believe they've just moved to Chelsea. He says that Mr. Fenwick will have two ripping pictures in the Academy, and is sure to get his name up. And, besides that, there is some lord or other who's wild about him—and means to buy everything he can paint. But I thought you said your man was married?—do you remember I chaffed you about him when he began, and you said, 'No fear—he is married to a school-teacher,' or something of that sort? Well, I asked about the wife, and my friend says, 'Nonsense! he isn't married—nothing of the sort—or, at any rate, if he is, he makes everybody believe he isn't—and there must be something wrong somewhere.' By-the-way, one of the pictures he's sending in is a wonderful portrait. An awfully beautiful woman—with a white velvet dress, my dear—and they say the painting of the dress is marvellous. She's the daughter of the Lord Somebody who's taken him up. They've introduced him to all sorts of smart people, and, as I said before, he's going to have a *tremendous* success. Some people have luck, haven't they?"

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She reproduced it as accurately as she could, read it through again, and then pushed it aside. With set lips she resumed her work, and by midnight she had put in the last stitch and fastened the last thread. That she should do so was essential to the plan she had in her mind.

For she had already determined what to do. Within forty-eight hours she would be in London. If he had really disowned and betrayed her—or if he had merely grown tired of her and wished to be quit of her—in either case she would soon discover what it behooved her to know.

When at last, in the utter silence of midnight, she took up her candle to go to bed, its light fell, as she moved towards the door, on the portrait of himself that Fenwick had left with her at Christmas. She looked at it long, dry-eyed. It was as though it began already to be the face of a stranger.

VII

“EUGÉNIE, are you there?”

“Yes, papa.”

Lord Findon, peering short-sightedly into the big drawing-room, obstructed by much furniture and darkened by many pictures, had not at first perceived the slender form of his daughter. The April day was receding, and Eugénie de Pastourelles was sitting very still, her hands lightly clasped upon a letter which lay outspread upon her lap. These moments of pensive abstraction were characteristic of her. Her life was turned within; she lived more truly in thought than in speech or action.

Lord Findon came in gayly. “I say, Eugénie, that fellow’s made a hit.”

“What fellow, papa?”

“Why, Fenwick, of course. Give me a cup of tea, there’s a dear. I’ve just seen Welby, who’s been hobnobbing with somebody on the Hanging Committee. Both pictures accepted, and the portrait will be on the line in the big room—the other very well hung, too, in one of the later rooms. Lucky dog! Millais came up and spoke to me about him—said he heard we had discovered him. Of course, there’s lots of criticism. Drawing and design, modern and realistic—the whole *painting* method, traditional and old-fashioned, except for some

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wonderful touches of pre-Raphaelitism—that's what most people say. Of course, the new men think it'll end in manner and convention; and the old men don't quite know *what* to say. Well, it don't much matter. If he's genius, he'll do as he likes—and if he hasn't—"

Lord Findon shrugged his shoulders, and then, throwing back his head against the back of his capacious chair, proceeded to "sip" his tea, held in both hands, according to an approved digestive method—ten seconds to a sip—he had lately adopted. He collected new doctors with the same zeal that he spent in pushing new artists.

Eugénie put out a hand and patted his shoulder tenderly. She and her father were the best of comrades, and they showed it most plainly in Lady Findon's absence. That lady was again on her travels, occupied in placing her younger daughter for a time in a French family, with a view to "finishing." Eugénie or Lord Findon wrote to her every day; they discussed her letters when they arrived with all proper *égards*; and, for the rest, enjoyed their *tête-à-tête*, and never dreamed of missing her. *Tête-à-tête*, indeed, it scarcely was; for there was still another daughter in the house, whom Madame de Pastourelles—her much older half-sister—mothered with great assiduity in Lady Findon's absence; and the elder son also, who was still unmarried, lived mainly at home. Nevertheless, if was recognized that "papa" and Eugénie had special claims upon each other, and as the household adored them both, they were never interfered with.

On this occasion Eugénie was bent on business as well as affection. She withdrew her hand from her father's shoulder in order to raise a monitory finger.

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"Genius or no, papa, it's time you paid him his money."

"How you go on, Eugénie!" said Lord Findon, crossing his knees luxuriously, as the tea filtered down.

"Pray, what money do I owe him?"

"Well, of course, if you wait till he's made a hit, prices will go up," said Eugénie, calmly. "I advise you to agree with him quickly, while you are in the way with him."

"I never asked him to paint you," said Lord Findon, hastily, swallowing a sip of tea under the regulation time, and frowning at the misdeed.

"Oh, shuffling papa! Come—how much?—two hundred?"

"Upon my word! A painter shouldn't propose to paint a picture, my dear, and then expect to get paid for it as if he'd been commissioned. The girls might as well propose matrimony to the men."

"Nobody need accept," said Eugénie, slyly, replenishing his cup. "I consider, papa, that you have bolted that cup."

"Then for goodness' sake don't give me any more!" cried Lord Findon. "It's no joke, Eugénie, this sipping business— Where were we? Oh, well, of course I knew we should have to take it—and I don't say I'm not pleased with it. But two hundred!"

"Not a penny less," said Eugénie—"and the apotheosis of my frock alone is worth the money. Two hundred for that—and two-fifty for the other?"

"Welby told me that actually was the price he had put on it! The young man won't starve, my dear, for want of knowing his own value."

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"I shouldn't wonder if he had been rather near starving," said Eugénie, gravely.

"Nothing of the kind, Eugénie," said her father, testily. "You think everybody as sensitive as yourself. I assure you, young men are tough, and can stand a bit of hardship."

"They seem to require butcher's meat all the same," said Eugénie. "Do you know, papa, that I have been extremely uncomfortable about our behavior to Mr. Fenwick."

"I entirely fail to see why," said Lord Findon, absently. He was holding his watch in his hand, and calculating seconds.

"We have let him paint my portrait without ever saying a word of money—and you have always behaved as though you meant to buy the 'Genius Loci.'"

"Well, so I do mean to buy it," said Lord Findon, closing his watch with a sigh of satisfaction.

"You should have told him so, papa, and advanced him some money."

"It is an excellent thing, my dear Eugénie, for a young man to be kept on tenterhooks. Otherwise they soon get above themselves."

"You have driven him into debt, papa."

"What on earth do you mean?"

"I have been questioning Mr. Cuningham. He doesn't know, but he *thinks* Mr. Watson has been lending him money."

"Artists are always so good to one another," said Lord Findon, complacently. "Nice fellow, Watson—but quite mad."

"Papa, you are incorrigible. I tell you he has been

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in great straits. He has not been able to buy a winter overcoat, and Mr. Cuninghame suspects he has often not had enough to eat. He does illustration-work the greater part of the night—*et cetera*."

"The way you pile on the agony, my dear!" said Lord Findon, rising. "What I see you want is that I should write the check, and then go with you to call on the young man?"

"Precisely!" said Eugénie, nodding.

Lord Findon looked at her.

"And that you suppose is your own idea?"

Eugénie waited—interrogatively.

"Do you know why I have never said a word to the young man about money?"

"Because you forgot it," said Eugénie, smiling.

"Not in the least," said Lord Findon, flushing like a school-boy found out; "I wanted my little sensation at the end."

"My very epicurean papa!" said Eugénie, caressing him. "I see! Young man in a garret—starving—*au désespoir*. Enter Providence, *alias* my papa—with fame in one hand and gold in the other. Ah, *que tu es comédien, mon père*. *À la bonne heure!*—I now order the carriage!"

She moved towards the bell, but paused suddenly:

"I forgot—Arthur was to come before six."

A slight silence fell between the father and daughter. Lord Findon cleared his throat, took up the evening paper and laid it down again.

"Eugénie!"

"Yes, papa."

Lord Findon went up to her and took her hand. She

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stood with downcast eyes, the other hand playing with the folds of her dress. Her father's face was discomposed.

"Eugénie!" he broke out. "I don't think he ought to come so much. Forgive me, dear!"

"You only think what I have thought for a long time," she said, in a low voice, without raising her eyes. "But to-day I sent for him."

"Because?"—Lord Findon's face expressed a quick and tender anxiety.

"I want to persuade him—to marry Elsie Bligh."

Lord Findon made a hurried exclamation, drew her to him, kissed her on the brow, and then, releasing her, turned away.

"I might have known—what you would do," he said, in a muffled voice.

"I ought to have done it long ago," she said, passionately; then, immediately curbing herself, she turned deliberately to a vase of roses that stood near and began to rearrange them, picking out a few faded blooms and throwing them on the wood fire.

Lord Findon watched her, the delicate, drooping figure in its gray dress, the thin hand among the roses.

"Eugénie!—tell me one thing!—you are in the same mind as ever about the divorce?"

She made a sign of assent.

"Just the same. I am Albert's wife—unless he himself asks me to release him—and then the release would only be—for him."

"You are too hard on yourself, Eugénie!" cried Lord Findon. "I vow you are! You set an impossible standard."

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"I am his wife"—she repeated, gently—"while he lives. And if he sent for me—at any hour of the day or night—I would go."

Lord Findon gave an angry sigh.

"You can't wonder, Eugénie," he said, impetuously, "that I often wish his death."

A shudder ran through her.

"Don't, papa! Never, never wish that. He loves life so."

"Yes!—now that he has ruined yours."

"He didn't mean to," she said, almost inaudibly.

"You know what I think."

Lord Findon restrained himself. In his eyes there was no excuse whatever for his scoundrel of a son-in-law, who after six years of marriage had left his wife for an actress, and was now living with another woman of his own class, a Comtesse S., ten years older than himself. He knew that Eugénie believed her husband to be insane; as for him, he had never admitted anything of the kind. But if it comforted her to believe it, let her, for Heaven's sake, believe it—poor child!

So he said nothing—as he paced up and down—and Eugénie finished the rearrangement of the roses.—Then she turned to him, smiling.

"You didn't know I saw Elsie yesterday?"

"Did she confide in you?"

"Oh, that—long ago! The poor child's dreadfully in love."

"Then it's a great responsibility," said Lord Findon, gravely. "How is he going to satisfy her?"

"Only too easily. She would marry him blindly—on any terms."

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There was a short silence. Then Eugénie gathered up the letter she had been reading when her father entered.

"Let's talk of something else, papa! Do you know that I've had a very interesting letter from Mr. Fenwick this afternoon?"

Lord Findon stared.

"Fenwick? What on earth does he write to you about?"

"Oh! this is not the first time by a long way!" said Eugénie, smiling. "He began it in March, when he thought he had offended me—by being rude to Arthur."

"So he was—abominably rude. But what can one expect? He hasn't had the bringing-up of a gentleman—and there you are. That kind of thing will out."

"I wonder whether it matters—to a genius?" said Eugénie, musing.

"It matters to everybody!" cried Lord Findon. "Gentlefolk, my dear, say what you will, are the result of a long natural selection—and you can't make 'em in a hurry."

"And what about genius? You will admit, papa, that a good many gentlefolks in the world go to one genius!"

The light was still good enough to show Lord Findon that, in spite of her flicker of gayety, Eugénie was singularly pale. And he knew well that they were both listening for the same step on the stairs. However, he tried to keep it up.

"Genius?" he said, humming and hawing—"genius? How do we know what it is—or who has it? Everybody's so diabolically clever nowadays. Take my ad-

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vice, Eugénie—I know you want to play Providence to that young fellow—you think you'll civilize him, and that kind of thing; but I warn you—he hasn't got breeding enough to stand it."

Eugénie drew a long breath.

"Well, don't scold me, papa—if I try—I must—" her voice escaped her, and she began again, firmly—"I must have something to fill up."

"Fill up what?"

She looked round to make sure that the servants had finished clearing away the tea, and that they were alone.

"The days—and the hours," she said, softly. "One must have something to think of."

Lord Findon frowned.

"He will fall in love with you, Eugénie—and then where shall we be?"

He heard a laugh—very sweet—very feminine, yet, to his ear, very forlorn.

"I'll take care of that. We'll find him a wife, too, papa—when he 'arrives.' We shall be in practice—you and I."

Lord Findon sprang up.

"Here he is!" he said, with very evident agitation. The pronoun clearly had no reference to Fenwick. Eugénie sat motionless, looking into the fire, her hands on her knee. Lord Findon listened a moment.

"I'm going to my room. Eugénie!—if I could be the slightest use—"

"Dear papa!" she looked up, smiling. "It's very simple."

With a muttered exclamation, Lord Findon walked

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to the farther end of the drawing-room, and vanished through an inner door.

The footman announced "Mr. Welby."

As soon as the door was shut, Eugénie rose.

Welby hurriedly approached her. "You say in your note that you have something important to tell me?"

She made a sign of assent, and as he grasped her hand, she allowed herself a moment's pause. Her eyes rested—just perceptibly—on the face of the man whose long devotion to her, expressed through every phase of delicate and passionate service, had brought them both at last to that point where feeling knows itself—where illusions die away—and the deep foundations of our life appear.

Welby's dark face quivered. In the touch of his friend's hand, in the look of her eyes there was that which told him that she had bidden him to no common meeting. The air between them was in an instant alive with memories. Days of first youth; youth's high impressions of great and lovely things; all the innocent, stingless joys of art and travel, of happy talk and ripening faculty, of pure ambitions, hero-worships, compassions, shared and mutually enkindled: these were forever intertwined with their thoughts of each other.

But much more than these!—

For him, the unspoken agony of loss suffered when she married; for her, the memories of her marriage, of the dreary languor into which its wreck had plunged her, and of the gradual revival in her of the old intellectual pleasures, the old joys of the spirit, under the influence of Arthur's life and Arthur's companionship. How simply he had offered all that his art, his tact, his genius

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had to give!—and how pitifully, how hungrily she had leaned upon it! It had seemed so natural. Her own mind was clear, her own pulses calm; their friendship had appeared a thing apart, and she was able to feel with sincerity and dignity, that if she received much, she also gave much—the hours of relief and pleasure which ease the labor, the inevitable torment of the artist, all that protecting environment which a woman's sweet and agile wit can build around a man's taxed brain or ruffled nerves. To chat with her, in success or failure; to be sure of her welcome, her smile at all times; to ask her sympathy in matters where he had himself trained in her the faculty of response; to rouse in her the gentle, diffident humor which seemed to him a much rarer and more distinguished thing than other women's brilliance; to watch the ways of a personality which appeared to many people a little cold, pale, and over-refined, and was to him supreme distinction; to search for pleasures for her, as a botanist hunts rare flowers; to save her from the most trifling annoyance, if time and brains could do it;—these things, for three years, had made the charm of Welby's life. And Eugénie knew it—knew it with an affectionate gratitude that had for long seemed both to her and to the world the last word of their situation on both sides—a note, a tone, which could always be evoked from it, touch or strike it where you would.

And now?

Through what subtle phases and developments had time led them to this moment of change and consciousness?—representing in her, sharp recoil, an instant girding of the will—and in him a new despair, which was

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also a new docility, a readiness to content and tranquilize her at any cost. As they stood thus, for these few seconds, amid the shadows of the rich encumbered room, the picture of the weeks and months they had just passed through flashed through both minds—illuminated—thrown into true relation with surrounding and irrevocable fact. Both trembled—she under the admonition of her own higher life—he, because existence beside her could never again be as sweet to him to-morrow as it had been yesterday.

She moved. The trance was broken.

"I do, indeed, want to talk to you," she said, in her gentlest voice. "We sha'n't have very long. Papa wants me in half an hour."

She motioned to the seat beside her; and their talk began.

Lord Findon sat alone in his study on the ground-floor, balancing a paper-knife on one finger, fidgeting with a newspaper of which he never read a word, and otherwise beguiling the time until the sound of Welby's step on the stairs should tell him that the interview upstairs was over.

His mind was full of disagreeable thoughts. Eugénie was dearer to him than any other human being, and Welby, his ward, the orphan child of one of his oldest friends—had been from his boyhood almost a son of the house. Eight years before, what more natural than that these two should marry? Welby had been then deeply in love; Eugénie in her first maiden bloom had been difficult to read, but a word from the father she adored would probably have been enough to incline her

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towards her lover, to transform and fire a friendship which was already more romantic than she knew. But Lord Findon could not make up his mind to it. Arthur was a dear fellow; but from the worldly point of view it was not good enough. Eugénie was born for a large sphere; it was her father's duty to find it for her if he could.

Hence the French betrothal—the crowning point of a summer visit to a French château where Eugénie had been the spoiled child of a party containing some of the greatest names in France. It flattered both Lord Findon's vanity and imagination to find himself brought into connection with historic families all the more attractive because of that dignified alienation from affairs, imposed on them by their common hatred of the Second Empire. Eugénie, too, had felt the romance of the *milieu*; had invested her French suitor with all that her own poetic youth could bring to his glorification; had gone to him a timid, willing, and most innocent bride.

Ah, well! it did not do to think of the sequel. Perhaps the man was mad, as Eugénie insisted; perhaps much was due to some obscure brain effects of exposure and hardship during the siege of Paris—for the war had followed close on their honeymoon. But, madness or wickedness, it was all the same; Eugénie's life was ruined, and her father could neither mend it nor avenge it.

For owing to some—in his eyes—quixotic tenderness of conscience on Eugénie's part, she would not sue for her divorce. She believed that Albert was not responsible—that he might return to her. And that passionate

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spiritual life of hers, the ideas of which Lord Findon only half understood, forbade her, it seemed, any step which would finally bar the way of that return; unless Albert should himself ask her to take it. But the Comte had never made a sign. Lord Findon could only suppose that he found himself as free as he wished to be, that the ladies he consorted with were equally devoid of scruples, and that he, therefore, very naturally, preferred to avoid publicity.

So here was Eugénie, husbandless and childless at eight and twenty—for the only child of the marriage had died within a year of its birth; the heroine of an odious story which, if it had never reached the law courts, was none the less perfectly well known in society; and, in the eyes of those who loved her, one of the bravest, saddest, noblest of women. Of course Welby had shared in the immense effort of the family to comfort and console her. They had been so eager to accept his help; he had given it with such tact and self-effacement; and now, meanly, they must help Eugénie to dismiss him! For it was becoming too big a thing, this devotion of his, both in Eugénie's life and also in the eyes of the world. Lord Findon must needs suppose—he did not choose to *know*—that people were talking; and if Eugénie would not free herself from her wretched Albert, she must not provide him—poor child!—with any plausible excuse.

All of which reasoning was strictly according to the canons as Lord Findon understood them; but it did not leave him much the happier. He was a sensitive, affectionate man, with great natural cleverness, and much natural virtue—wholly unleavened by either

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thought or discipline. He did the ordinary things from the ordinary motives; but he suffered when the ordinary things turned out ill, more than another man would have done. It would certainly have been better, he ruefully admitted, if he had not meddled so much with Eugénie's youth. And presently he supposed he should have to forgive Charlie!—(Charlie was the son who had married his nurse)—if only to prove to himself that he was not really the unfeeling or snobbish father of the story-books.

Ah! there was the up-stairs door! Should he show himself, and make Arthur understand that he was their dear friend all the same, and always would be?—it was only a question of a little drawing-in.

But his courage failed him. He heard the well-known step come down-stairs and cross the hall. The front-door closed, and Lord Findon was still balancing the paper-knife.

Would he really marry that nice child Elsie? Elsie Bligh was a cousin of the Findons; a fair-haired, slender slip of a thing, the daughter of a retired Indian general. The Findons had given a ball the year before for her coming-out, and she had danced through the season, haloed, Euphrosyne-like, by a charm of youth and laughter—till she met Arthur Welby. Since then Euphrosyne had grown a little white and piteous, and there had been whisperings and shakings of the head among the grown-ups who were fond of her.

Well, well; he supposed Eugénie would give him some notion of the way things had gone. As to her—his charming, sweet-natured Eugénie!—it comforted him to remember the touch of resolute and generally cheerful

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stoicism in her character. If a hard thing had to be done, she would not only do it without flinching, but without avenging it on the by-standers afterwards. A quality rare in women!

"Papa!—is the carriage there?"

It was her voice calling. Lord Findon noticed with relief its even, silvery note. The carriage was waiting, and in a few minutes she was seated beside him, and they were making their way eastwards through the sunset streets.

"Dear?" he said, with timid interrogation, laying his hand momentarily on hers.

Eugénie was looking out of the window with her face turned away.

"He was very—kind," she said, rather deliberately. "Don't let us talk about it, papa—but wait—and see!"

Lord Findon understood that she referred to Elsie Bligh—that she had sown her seed, and must now let it germinate.

But herself—what had it cost her? And he knew well that he should never ask the question; and that, if he did, she would never answer it.

By the time they were threading the slums of Seven Dials she was talking rather fast and flowingly of Fenwick.

"You have brought the check, papa?"

"I have my check-book."

"And you are quite certain about the pictures?"

"Quite."

"It will be nice to make him happy," she said, softly.

"His letters have been pretty doleful."

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"What has he found to write about?" exclaimed Lord Findon, wondering.

"Himself, mostly!" she laughed. "He likes rhetoric—and he seems to have found out that I do too. As I told you, he began with an apology—and since then he writes about books and art—and—and the evils of aristocracy."

"Bless my soul, what the deuce does he know about it! And you answer him?"

"Yes. You see he writes extremely well—and it amuses me."

Privately, he thought that if she encouraged him beyond a very moderate point, Fenwick would soon become troublesome. But whenever she pleaded that anything "amused" her, he could never find a word to say.

Every now and then he watched her, furtively trying to pierce that gray veil in which she had wrapped herself. To-morrow morning, he supposed, he should hear her step on the stairs, towards eight o'clock—should hear it passing his door in going, and an hour later in coming back—and should know that she had been to a little Ritualist church close by, where what Lady Findon called "fooleries" went on, in the shape of "daily celebrations" and "vestments" and "reservation." How lightly she stepped; what a hidden act it was; never spoken of, except once, between him and her! It puzzled him often; for he knew very well that Eugénie was no follower of things received. She had been a friend of Renan and of Taine in her French days; and he, who was a Gallio with a leaning to the Anglican Church, had sometimes guessed with discomfort that Eugénie was in truth what his Low Church wife called a "free-thinker."

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She never spoke of her opinions, directly, even to him. But the books she ordered from Paris, or Germany, and every now and then the things she let fall about them, were enough for any shrewd observer. It was here too, perhaps, that she and Arthur were in closest sympathy; and every one knew that Arthur, poor old boy, was an agnostic.

And yet this daily pilgrimage—and that light and sweetness it breathed into her aspect!—

So one day he had asked her abruptly why she liked the little church so much, and its sacramental “goings-on.”

“One wouldn’t expect it, you know, darling—from the things you read.”

Eugénie had colored faintly.

“Wouldn’t you, papa? It seems to me so simple. It’s an *Action*—not words—and an action means anything you like to put into it—one thing to me—another to you. Some day we shall all be tired, sha’n’t we?—of creeds, and sermons, but never of ‘This *do*, in remembrance of Me!’ ”

And she had put up her hand to caress his, with such a timid sweetness of lip, and such a shining of the eye, that he had been silenced, feeling himself indeed in the presence of something he was not particularly well-fitted to explore.

Well, if she was inconsequent, she was dear!—and if her mystical fancies comforted and sustained her, nobody should ever annoy or check her in the pursuit of them. He put a very summary stop to his wife’s “Protestant nonsense,” whenever it threatened to worry Eugénie; though on other occasions it amused him.

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The landlady in Bernard Street greeted them with particular effusion. If they had only known, they represented to her—cautious yet not unkindly soul!—the main security for those very long arrears of rent she had allowed her lodger to run up. Were they now come—at this unusual hour—to settle up with Mr. Fenwick? If so, her own settling up—sweet prospect!—might be in sight. Cuningham and Watson had recently left her, and taken a joint studio in Chelsea. Their rooms, moreover, were still unlet. Her anxieties therefore were many, and it was with lively expectation that she watched the “swells” grope their way up-stairs to Mr. Fenwick’s room. She always knew it must come right some day, with people like that about.

Lord Findon and Eugénie mounted the stairs. The studio door was half-open. As they approached the threshold they heard Fenwick speaking.

“I say, hand me that rag—and look sharp and bring me some more oil—quick! And where the devil is that sketch? Well, get the oil—and then look for it—under that pile over there—No!—hi!—stand still a moment—just where you are—I want to see the tone of your head against this background! Hang it!—the light’s going!”

The visitors paused—to see Fenwick standing between them and a large canvas covered with the first “laying-in” of an important subject. The model, a thin, dark-faced fellow, was standing meekly on the spot to which Fenwick had motioned him, while the artist, palette on thumb, stood absorbed and frowning, his keen eye travelling from the man’s head to the canvas behind it.

Lord Findon smiled. He was a clever amateur, and relished the details of the business.

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"Smell's good!" he said, in Eugénie's ear, sniffing the scents of the studio. "Looks like a fine subject too. And just now he's king of it. The torments are all ahead. Hullo, Fenwick!—may we come in?"

Fenwick turned sharply and saw them in the doorway. He came to meet them with mingled pleasure and embarrassment.

"Come in, please! Hope you don't mind this get-up." He pointed to his shirt-sleeves.

"It's we who apologize!" smiled Eugénie. "You are in a great moment!"

She glanced at the canvas, filled with a rhythmical group of dim figures, already beautiful, though they had caught the artist and his work in the very act of true creation—when after weeks or months of brooding, of hard work, of searching study of this or that, of inspiration tested and verified, of mechanical drudgery, of patient construction, *birth* begins—the birth of values, relations, distances, the *drawing of color*.

Fenwick shrugged his shoulders. His eyes sparkled in a strained and haggard face, with such an ardor that Eugénie had the strange impression of some headlong force, checked in mid-career, and filling the quiet studio with the thrill of its sudden reining-up; and Lord Findon's announcement was checked on his lips.

"Why, it is my subject!" she cried, looking again at the picture.

"Well, of course!" said Fenwick, flushing.

It was only a few weeks before that she had read him, from a privately printed volume, a poem, of which the new, strange music was then freshly in men's ears—suggesting that he should take it as a theme. The poem is

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called "An Elegy on a Lady, whom grief for the death of her betrothed killed." Its noble verse summons all true maids and lovers to bear the dead company, in that burial procession which should have been her bridal triumph. The priests go before, white-robed; the "dark-stoled minstrels follow"; then the bier with the bride:—

And then the maidens in a double row,
Each singing soft and low,
And each on high a torch upstaying:
Unto her lover lead her forth with light,
With music, and with singing, and with praying.

"Here is the finished sketch," he said, placing it in her hands and watching her eagerly.

She bent over it in emotion, conscious of that natural delight of woman when she has fired an artist.

"How fine!—and how you must have worked!"

"Night and day. It possessed me. I didn't want you to see it yet awhile. But you understand?—it is to be romantic—not sentimental. Strong form. Every figure discriminated, and yet kept subordinate to the whole. No monotony! Character everywhere—expressing grief—and longing. An evening light—between sunset and moonrise. The sky gold—and the torches. Then below—in the crowd, the autumn woods, the distant River of Death, towards which the procession moves—a massing of blues and purples"—his hand—pointing—worked rapidly over the canvas; "and here, some pale rose, black, emerald green, dimly woven in—and lastly, the whites of the bride-maidens, and of the bride upon her bier—towards which, of course, the whole construction mounts."

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"I see!—a sort of Mantegna Triumph—with a difference!"

"The drawing's all right," said Fenwick, with a long breath, and a stretch. "If I can only get the paint as I want it"—he stooped forward again peering into the canvas—"It's the *handling of the paint*—that's what excites me! I want to get it broad and pure—no messing—no working over!—a fine surface!—and yet none of your waxy prettiness. The forms like Millet—simple—but full of knowledge. *Ah!*"—he took up a brush, flung it down bitterly, and turned on his heel—"I can draw!—but why did no one ever teach me to paint?"

Eugénie lifted her eyebrows—amused at the sudden despair. Lord Findon laughed. He had restrained himself so far with difficulty while these two romanced; and now, bursting with his tidings, he laid a hand on Fenwick:—

"Look here, young man—we didn't come just on the loose—to bother you. Have you heard—?"

Fenwick made a startled movement.

"Heard what?"

"Why, that your two pictures are *accepted*!—and will be admirably hung—both on the line, and one in the big room."

The color rushed again into Fenwick's cheeks.

"Are you sure?" he stammered, looking from one to the other.

Findon gave his authority, and then Eugénie held out her hand.

"We *are* so glad!"

She had thrown back the gauze veil in which she had

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shrouded herself during her drive with her father, and her charming face—still so pale!—shone in sympathy.

Fenwick awkwardly accepted her congratulation, and shook the proffered hand.

"I expect it's your doing," he said, abruptly.

"Not in the least!" cried Lord Findon. His eye twinkled. "My dear fellow, what are you thinking of? These are the days of merit, and publicity!—when every man comes to his own." Fenwick grinned a little. "You've earned *your* success anyway, and it 'll be a thumper. Now look here, where can we talk business?"

Fenwick put down his palette, and slipped his arms into his coat. The model lit a lamp, and disappeared. Eugénie meanwhile withdrew discreetly to the farther end of the room, where she busied herself with some wood-blocks on which Fenwick had been drawing. The two men remained hidden behind the large canvas, and she heard nothing of their conversation. She was aware, however, of the scratching of a pen, and immediately after her father called to her.

"Eugénie, come!—we must get back for dinner."

Fenwick, looking up, saw her emerging from the shadows of the farther room into the bright lamp-light, her gray veil floating cloudwise round her. As she came towards him, he felt her once more the emblem and angel of his good-fortune. All the inspiration she had been to him, all that closer acquaintance, to which during the preceding weeks she had admitted him, throbbed warm at his heart. His mind was full of gratitude—full also of repentance!—towards Phoebe, and towards her. That very night would he write his confession to her, at last!

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—tell all his story, beg her to excuse his foolish lack of frankness and presence of mind to Lord Findon, and ask her kindness for Phœbe and the child. He already saw little Carrie on her knee, and the *ægis* of her protecting sweetness spread over them all.

Meanwhile the impression upon her was that he had taken the news of his success with admirable self-restraint, that he was growing and shaping as a human being, no less than as an artist, that his manner to her father was excellent, neither tongue-tied nor effusive, and his few words of thanks manly and sincere. She thought to herself that here was the beginning of a great career—the moment when the streamlet finds its bed, and enters upon its true and destined course.

And in the warm homage, the evident attachment she had awakened in the man before her, there was for Eugénie at the moment a peculiar temptation. Had she not just given proof that she was set apart—that for her there could be no more thought of love in its ordinary sense? In her high-strung consciousness of Welby's dismissal, she felt herself not only secure against the vulgar snares of vanity and sex, but, as it were, endowed with a larger spiritual freedom. She had sent away the man of whom she was in truth afraid—the man whom she might have loved. But in this distant, hesitating, and yet strong devotion that Fenwick was beginning to show her, there was something that appealed—and with peculiar force, in the immediate circumstances, to a very sore and lonely heart. Here was no danger to be feared!—nothing but a little kind help to a man of genius, whose great gifts might be so

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easily nullified and undone by his thorny vehemence of character, his lack of breeding and education.

The correspondence indeed which had arisen between them out of Fenwick's first remarkable letter to her, had led unconsciously to a new attitude on the part of Madame de Pastourelles. That he was an interesting and promising artist she knew; that on subjects connected with his art he could talk copiously and well, that also, she knew; but that he could write, with such pleasant life, detail, and ingenuity, was a surprise, and it attracted her, as it would have attracted a Frenchwoman of the eighteenth century. Her maimed life had made her perforce an "intellectual"; and in these letters, the man's natural poetry and force stirred her enthusiasm. Hence a new interest and receptivity in her, quickened by many small and natural incidents—books lent and discussed, meetings in picture-galleries, conversations in her father's house, and throughout it that tempting, dangerous pleasure of "doing good," that leads astray so many on whom Satan has no other hold! She was introducing him every week to new friends—her friends, the friends she wished him to have; she was making his social way plain before him; she had made her father buy his pictures; and she meant to look after his career in the future.

So that, quivering as she still was under the strain of her scene with Welby—so short, so veiled, and at bottom so tragic!—she showed herself glitteringly cheerful—almost gay—as she stood talking a few minutes with her father and Fenwick. The restless happiness in Fenwick's face and movements gave his visitors indeed so much pleasure that they found it hard to go; several

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times they said good-bye, only to plunge again into the sketches and studies that lay littered about the room, to stand chatting before the new canvas, to laugh and gossip—till Lord Findon remembered that Eugénie did not yet know that he had offered Fenwick five hundred pounds for the two pictures instead of four hundred and fifty pounds; and that he might have the prompt satisfaction of telling her that he had bettered her instructions, he at last dragged her away. On this day of all days, did he wish to please her!—if it were only in trifles.

VIII

WHEN Fenwick was alone, he walked to a chest of drawers in which he kept a disorderly multitude of possessions, and took out a mingled handful of letters, photographs, and sketches. Throwing them on a table, he looked for and found a photograph of Phœbe with Carrie on her knee, and a little sketch of Phœbe—one of the first ideas for the "Genius Loci." He propped them up against some books, and looked at them in a passion of triumph.

"It's all right, old woman—it's all right!" he murmured, smiling. Then he spread out Lord Findon's check before the photograph, as though he offered it at Phœbe's shrine.

Five hundred pounds! Well, it was only what his work was worth—what he had every right to expect. None the less, the actual possession of the money seemed to change his whole being. What would his old father say? He gave a laugh, half scornful, half good-humored, as he admitted to himself that not even now—probably—would the old man relent.

And Phœbe!—he imagined the happy wonder in her eyes—the rolling away of all clouds between them. For six weeks now he had been a veritable brute about letters! First, the strain of his work—(and the final wrestle with the "Genius Loci," including the misfortune of the

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paints, had really been a terrible affair!)—then—he confessed it—the intellectual excitement of the correspondence with Madame de Pastourelles: between these two obsessions, or emotions, poor Phœbe had fared ill.

“But you’ll forgive me now, old girl—won’t you?” he said, kissing her photograph in an effusion that brought the moisture to his eyes. Then he replaced it, with the sketches, in the drawer, forgetting in his excitement the letters which lay scattered on the table.

What should he do now? Impossible to settle down to any work! The North post had gone, but he might telegraph to Phœbe and write later. Meanwhile he would go over to Chelsea, and see Cuninghame and Watson—repay Watson his debt!—or promise it at least for the morrow, when he should have had time to cash the check—perhaps even—pompous thought!—to open a banking account.

Suddenly a remembrance of Morrison crossed his mind and he stood a moment with bent head—sobered—as though a ghost passed through the room. Must he send a hundred pounds to Mrs. Morrison? He envisaged it, unwillingly. Already his treasure seemed to be melting away. Time enough, surely, for that. He and Phœbe had so much to do—to get a house and furnish it, to pay pressing bills, to provide models for the new picture! Why, it would be all gone directly!

He locked up the check safely, took his hat, and was just running out when his eye fell on the three-hours’ sketch of Madame de Pastourelles, which had been the foundation of the portrait. He had recently framed it, but had not yet found a place for it. It stood on the floor, against the wall. He took it up, looked at it with

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delight—by Jove! it was a brilliant thing!—and placing it on a small easel, he arranged two lamps with movable shades, which he often used for drawing in the evening, so as to show it off. There was in him more than a touch of theatricality, and as he stood back from this little arrangement to study its effect, he was charmed with his own fancy. There she queened it, in the centre of the room—his patron saint, and Phœbe's. He knew well what he owed her—and Phœbe should soon know. He was in a hurry to be off; but he could not make up his mind—superstitiously—to put out the lights. So, after lingering a few moments before her, in this tremor of imagination and of pleasure, he left her thus, radiant and haloed!—the patron saint in charge.

On his way out he found an anxious landlady upon his path. Mrs. Gibbs was soon made happy, so far as promises could do it, and in another minute he was in a hansom speeding westward. It was nearly seven o'clock on a mild April evening. The streets were full, the shops still open. As he passed along Oxford Street, monarch it seemed of all he beheld, his eyes fell on Peter Robinson's windows, glittering with lights, and gay with spring ribbons, laces, and bright silks. An idea rushed into his mind. Only the week before, on his first visit to the new Chelsea quarters whither Cuninghame and Watson had betaken themselves, he had stumbled upon an odd little scene in the still bare, ungarnished studio. Cuninghame, who had been making money with some rapidity of late, was displaying before the half-sympathetic, half-sarcastic eyes of Watson, some presents that he was just sending off to his mother and sisters in Scotland. A white dress, a lace shawl, some handkerchiefs,

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a sash, a fan—there they lay, ranged on brown paper on the studio floor. Cuningham was immensely proud of them, and had been quite ready to show them to Fenwick also, fingering their fresh folds, enlarging on their beauties. And Fenwick had thought sorely of Phoebe as he watched Cuningham turn the pretty things over. When had he ever been able to give her any feminine gauds? Always this damned poverty, pressing them down!

But now—by Jove!—

He made the hansom stop, rushed into Peter Robinson's, bought a dress-length of pink-and-white cotton, a blue sash for Carrie, and a fichu of Indian muslin and lace. Thrusting his hand into his pocket for money, he found only a sovereign—pretty nearly his last!—and some silver. "That's on account," he said loftily, giving the sovereign to the shopman; "send the things home to-morrow afternoon—to-morrow *afternoon*, mind—and I'll pay for them on delivery."

Then he jumped into his hansom again, and for sheer excitement told the man to hurry, and he should have an extra shilling. On they sped down Park Lane. The beds of many-colored hyacinths in the Park shone through the cheerful dusk; the street was crowded, and beyond, the railings, the seats under the trees were full of idlers. There was a sparkle of flowers in the windows of the Park Lane houses, together with golden sunset touches on the glass; and pretty faces wrapped in lace or gauze looked out from the hansoms as they passed him by. Again the London of the rich laid hold on him; not threateningly this time, but rather as though a door were opened and a hand beckoned. His own upward

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progress had begun; he was no longer jealous of the people who stood higher.

Dorchester House, Dudley House;—he looked at them with a good-humored tolerance. After all, London was pleasant; there was some recognition of merit; and even something to be said for Academies.

Then his picture began to hover before him. It was a big thing; suppose it took him years? Well, there would be portraits to keep him alive. Meanwhile it was true enough what he had said to Madame de Pastourelles. As a *painter* he had never been properly trained. His values were uncertain; and he had none of the sureness of method which men with half his talent had got out of study under a man like, say, Carolus Duran.

Supposing now, he went to Paris for a year? No, no!—too many of the Englishmen who went to Paris lost their individuality and became third-rate Frenchmen. He would puzzle out things for himself—stick to his own programme and ideas.

English poetic feeling, combined with as much of French technique as it could assimilate—there was the line of progress. Not the technique of these clever madmen—Manet, Degas, Monet and the rest—with the mean view of life of some, and the hideous surface of others. No!—but the Barbizon men—and Mother Nature, first and foremost! Beauty too, beauty of idea and selection—not mere beauty of paint, to which everything else—line, modelling, construction—was to be vilely sacrificed.

In his exaltation he began an imaginary article denouncing the Impressionists, spouting it aloud as he went along; so that the passers-by caught a word or two, through the traffic, now and then, and turned to

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look, astonished, at the handsome, gesticulating fellow in the hansom. Till he stopped abruptly, first to laugh at himself, and then to chuckle over the thought of Phœbe, and the presents he had just bought.

Meanwhile, at the very moment, probably, that Fenwick was in Peter Robinson's shop, an omnibus coming from Euston passed through Russell Square, and a woman, volubly advised by the conductor, alighted from it at the corner of Bernard Street. She was very tall and slender; her dress was dusty and travel-stained, and as she left the omnibus she drew down a thickly spotted veil over a weary face. She walked quickly down Bernard Street, looking at the numbers, and stopped before the door of Fenwick's lodgings.

The door was opened by Mrs. Gibbs, the landlady.

"Is Mr. Fenwick at home?"

"No; he's just this minute gone out. Did you want to see him, miss?"

The young woman hung back a moment in hesitation. Then she advanced into the hall.

"I've got a parcel for him"—she showed it under her arm. "If you'll allow me, I'll go up, and leave it in his room. It's important."

"And what name, miss—if I may ask?"

The visitor hesitated again—then she said, quietly:

"I am Mrs. Fenwick—Mr. Fenwick's wife."

"His wife!" cried the other, startled. "Oh no; there is some mistake—he hasn't got no wife!"

Phœbe drew herself up fiercely.

"You mustn't say such things to me, please! I *am* Mr. Fenwick's wife—and you must please show me his rooms."

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The emphasis and the passion with which these words were said left Mrs. Gibbs gaping. She was a worthy woman, for whom the world—so far as it could be studied from a Bernard Street lodging-house—had few surprises; and a number of alternative conjectures ran through her mind as she studied Phoebe's appearance.

"I'm sure, ma'am, I meant no offence," she said, hurriedly; "but, you see, Mr. Fenwick has never—as you might say—"

"No," said Phoebe, proudly, interrupting her; "there was no reason why he should speak of his private affairs. I have been in the country, waiting till he could make a home for me. Now will you show me his room?"

But Mrs. Gibbs did not move. She stood staring at Phoebe, irresolute—thinking, no doubt, of the penny novelettes on which she fed her leisure moments—till Phoebe impatiently drew a letter from her pocket.

"I see you doubt what I say. Of course it is quite right that you should be careful about admitting anybody to my husband's rooms in his absence. But here is the last letter I received from him a week or two ago."

And, drawing it from its envelope, Phoebe showed first the signature, "John Fenwick," and then pointed to the address on the envelope—"Mrs. John Fenwick, Green Nab Cottage, Great Langdale."

"Well, I never!" said Mrs. Gibbs, staring still more widely, and slowly retreating—"And he never lettin' me post a letter since he came here—not once—no confidence nowhere—and I'm sure I have been his good friend!"

Phoebe moved towards the staircase.

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"Is Mr. Fenwick's room on the first floor or the second?"

Lost in protesting wonder, Mrs. Gibbs wheezily mounted the stairs far enough to point to the door of Fenwick's room.

"Here's matches"—she fumbled in her apron-pocket. "There's a candle on the mantel-piece. Though I dare say he's left his lamp going. He generally does—he don't take no account of what I says to him about it."

Phoebe passed on. Mrs. Gibbs called after her:

"So I'm to say 'Mrs. Fenwick,' am I, madam—when Mr. Fenwick gets back."

She stood leaning against the banisters, one hand behind her, looking her visitor up and down with impertinent eyes.

"Certainly," said Phoebe. Then she put her hand to her head, and said, in a low, bewildered voice, "At least, if I'm here—if he comes back soon—but I can't stay."

Mrs. Gibbs went down-stairs again, consumed with conjecture and excitement.

"Wife indeed!—that's what they all say—bound to. But of all the cool young women! I hope I haven't done no harm, letting her into the studio. But that letter and all—it was enough to make a jelly of you—things a-turnin' out like this. And me all a-tremblin', and givin' in!"

Phoebe opened the studio door, noticed the bright light with amazement, and shut the door behind her. She stood there, with her back to it, sharply arrested, her eyes held by the spectacle before her.

Close to her, in the centre of the freest portion of the

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floor, rose the sketch of Eugénie de Pastourelles, lit by the two lamps, which threw a concentrated glow upon the picture, and left all the rest of the room shadowy. Nothing could have been more strange than the aspect of the drawing, thus solitary, and brightly illuminated. Phoebe looked at it in bewilderment, then round the littered studio. Beyond the lamps, she saw the large new canvas, showing dimly the first "laying-in" of its important subject. On the floor, and running round the walls, was a thin line of sketches and canvases. The shallow, semi-circular window at the farther end of the room was not yet curtained, and the branches of the still leafless plane-tree outside showed darkly in the gathering dusk. The room, apart from its one spot of light, struck bare and chill. Except for the "throne" and a few chairs, it contained scarcely any furniture. But, for Phoebe, it was held by two presences. Everything around her spoke of John. Here was his familiar belongings—his clothes that she had mended—his books—his painting things. And over John's room—her husband's room—the woman in the picture held sway.

She slowly approached the drawing, while a sob mounted in her throat. She was still in the grip of that violent half-hysterical impulse which had possessed her since the evening of Bella Morrison's visit. Nights almost sleepless, arrangements made and carried out in a tumult of excitement, a sense of impending tragedy, accepted, and almost welcomed, as the end of long weeks of doubt and self-torment, which had become at last unbearable—into this fatal coil of actions and impressions, the young wife had been sinking deeper and deeper with each successive hour. She had neither

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friend nor adviser. Her father, a weak inarticulate man, was dying; her step-mother hated her; and she had long ceased to write to Miss Anna, because it was she who had urged John to go to London! All sane inference and normal reasoning were now indeed, and had been for some time, impossible to her. Fenwick, possessed by the imaginations of his art, had had no imagination—alack!—to spend upon his wife's case, and those morbid processes of brain developed in her by solitude, and wounded love, and mortified vanity. One hour with him!—one hour of love, scolding, tears—would have saved them both. Alone, she was incapable of the merest common-sense. She came prepared to discover the worst—to find evidence for all her fears. And for the worst she had elaborately laid her plans. Only if it should turn out that she had been an unkind, unreasonable wife, wrongly suspicious of her husband, was she uncertain what she would do.

With dry, reddened eyes, she stared at the portrait of the woman who must have stolen John from her. The mere arrangement of the room seemed to her excited nerves a second outrage;—Mrs. Gibbs's reception of her and all that it had implied, had been the first. What could this strange illumination mean, but that John's thoughts were taken up with his sitter in an unusual and unlawful way? For weeks he could leave his wife without a letter, a word of affection. But before going out for an hour, he must needs light these lamps and place them so—in order that this finicking lady should not feel herself deserted, that he should still seem to be admiring and adoring her!

And after all, was she so pretty? Phœbe looked at



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the pale and subtle face, at the hair and eyes so much less brilliant than her own, at the thin figure, and the repose of the hands. Not pretty at all!—she said to herself, violently—but selfish, and artful, and full, of course, of all the tricks and wiles of “society people.” *Didn't* she know that John was married? Phœbe scornfully refused to believe it. Such women simply didn't care what stood in their way. If they took a fancy to a man, what did it matter whether he were married or no? The poor girl stood there, seething with passion, pluming herself on a knowledge of the world which enabled her to “see through” these abominable great ladies.

But if she didn't know, if Bella Morrison's tale were true, then it was John, on whom Phœbe's rage returned to fling itself with fresh and maddened bitterness. That he should have thus utterly ignored her in his new surroundings—have never said a word about her to the landlady with whom he had lodged for nearly a year, or to any of his new acquaintances and friends—should have deliberately hidden the very fact of his marriage—could a husband give a wife any more humiliating proof of his indifference, or of her insignificance in his life?

Meanwhile the picture possessed her more and more. Closer and closer she came, her chest heaving. Was it not as though John had foreseen her coming, her complaints—and had prepared for her this silent, this cruel answer! The big picture of course was gone in to the Academy, but his wife, if she came, was to see that he could not do without Madame de Pastourelles. So the sketch, with which he had finished, really, months ago, was dragged out, and made queen of all it surveyed, be-

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cause, no doubt, he was miserable at parting with the picture. Ingenuity and self-torment grew with what they fed on. The burning lamps—the solitude—the graceful woman, with her slim, fine-lady hands—with every moment they became in Phoebe's eyes a more bitter, a more significant offence. Presently, in her foolish agony, she did actually believe that he had thought she might descend upon him, provoked beyond bearing by his silence and neglect, and had carefully planned this infamous way of telling her—what he wanted her to know.

Waves of unreasoning passion swept across her. The gentleness and docility of her youth had been perhaps mechanical, half-conscious; she came in truth of a hard stock, capable of violence. She put her hands to her face, trembled, and turned away. She began to be afraid of herself.

With a restless hand, as though she caught hold of anything that might distract her from the picture, she began to rummage among the papers on the table. Suddenly her attention pounced upon them; she bent her head, took up some and carried them to the lamp. Five or six large envelopes, bearing a crest and monogram, addressed in a clear hand, and containing each a long letter—she found a packet of these, tied round with string. Throwing off her hat and veil, she sat down under the lamp, and, without an instant's demur, began to read.

First, indeed, she turned to the signature—"Eugénie de Pastourelles." Why, pray, should Madame de Pastourelles write these long letters to another woman's husband? The hands which held them shook with

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anger and misery. These pages filled with discussion of art and books, which had seemed to the woman of European culture, and French associations, so natural to write—which had been written as the harmless and kindly occupation of an idle hour, with the shades of Madame de Sévigné and Madame du Deffand standing by, were messengers of terror and despair to this ignorant and yet sentimental Westmoreland girl. Why should they be written at all to *her* John, her own husband? No nice woman that she had ever known wrote long letters to married men. What could have been the object of writing these pages and pages about John's pictures and John's prospects?—affected stuff!—and what was the meaning of these appointments to see pictures, these invitations to St. James's Square, these thanks “for the kind and charming things you say”—above all, of the constant and crying omission, throughout these delicately written sheets, of any mention whatever of Fenwick's wife and child. But of course for the two correspondents whom these letters implied, such dull, stupid creatures did not exist.

Ah! but wait a moment. Her eye caught a sentence—then fastened greedily on the following passage:

“I hardly like to repeat what I said the other day—you will think me a very intrusive person!—but when you talk of melancholy and loneliness, of feeling the strain of competition, and the nervous burden of work, so that you are sometimes tempted to give it up altogether, I can't help repeating that some day a wife will save you from all this. I have seen so much of artists!—they of all men should marry. It is quite a delusion to suppose that art—whatever art means—is enough for

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them, or for anybody. Imagination is the most exhausting of all professions!—and if we women are good for nothing else we *can* be cushions—we can ‘stop a chink and keep the wind away.’ So pay no attention, please, to my father’s diatribes. You will very soon be prosperous—sooner perhaps than you think. A *home* is what you want.”

Kind and simple sentences!—written so innocently, and interpreted so perversely! And yet the fierce and blind bewilderment with which Phoebe read or misread them was natural enough. She never doubted for a moment, but that the bad woman who wrote them meant to offer herself to John. She was separated from her husband, John had said, declaring of course that it was not her fault. As if any one could be sure of that! But, at any rate, if she were separated, she might be divorced—some time. And then—*then*!—*she* would be so obliging as to make a “cushion,” and a home, for Phoebe Fenwick’s husband! As to his not being grand enough for her, that was all nonsense. When a man was as clever as John, he was anybody’s equal—one saw that every day. No, this creature would make people buy his pictures—she would push him on—and after a while—

With a morbid and devastating rapidity, a whole scheme by which the woman before her might possess herself of John, unfolded itself in Phoebe’s furious mind.

Yet, surely, it would only want one word from her—from her, his wife?—

She felt herself trembling. Her limbs began to sink under her. She dropped upon a chair, sobbing. What was the use of fighting, of protesting? John had for-

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gotten her—John's heart had grown cold to her. She might dismay and trample on her rival—how would that give her back her husband?

Oh, how could he, how *could* he have treated her so! "I know I was ill-tempered and cross, John—I couldn't write letters like that—but I did, *did* love you—you know, you know—I did!"

It seemed as though she twined her arms round him, and he sat rigid as a stone, with a hard, contemptuous mouth. A lonely agony, a blackness of despair, seized on Phœbe, as she crouched there, the letters on her lap, her hands hanging, her beautiful eyes, blurred with tears and sleeplessness, fixed on the picture. What she felt was absurd; but how many tragedies—ay, the deepest—are at bottom ridiculous! She had lost him; he cared no more for her; he had passed into another world out of her ken; and what was to become of her?

She started up, goaded by a blind instinct of revenge, seizing she scarcely knew what. On the table lay a palette, laden with some dark pigment with which Fenwick had just been sketching in part of his new picture. In a pot beside it were brushes.

She caught up a large brush, dipped it in the paint, and going to the picture—panting and crimson—she daubed it from top to bottom, blotting out the eyes, the mouth, the beautiful outline of the head—above all, the hands, whose delicate whiteness specially enraged her.

When the work of wreck was done, she stood a moment gazing at it. Then, violently, she looked for writing-paper. She could see none: but there was an unused half-sheet at the back of one of Madame de Pastourelles's letters, and she roughly tore it off. Making

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use of a book held on her knee, and finding the pen and ink with which, only half an hour before, Lord Findon had written his check, she began to write:

"Good-bye, John,—I have found out all I want to know, and you will never see me again. I will never be a burden on a man who is ashamed of me, and has behaved as though I were dead. It is no good wasting words—you know it's true. Perhaps you may think I have no right to take Carrie. But I can't be alone—and, after all, she is more mine than yours. Don't trouble about me. I have some money, and I mean to support myself and Carrie. It was only last night this idea came to me, though it was the night before that— Never mind—I can't write about it, it would take too long, and it doesn't really matter to either of us. I don't want you to find me here; you might persuade me to come back to you, and I know it would be for the misery of both of us. What was I saying?—oh, the money— Well, last night, a cousin of mine, from Keswick, perhaps you remember him—Freddie Tolson—came to see me. Father sent him. You didn't believe what I told you about father—you thought I was making up. You'll be sorry, I think, when you read this, for by now, most likely, father has passed away. Freddie told me the doctor had given him up, and he was very near going. But he sent Freddie to me, with some money he had really left me in his will—only he was afraid Mrs. Gibson would get hold of it, and never let me have it. So he sent it by hand, with his love and blessing—and Freddie was to say he was sorry you had left me so long, and he didn't think it was a right thing for a man to do. Never mind how much it was. It's my very own, and I'm glad it comes

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from my father, and not from you. I have my embroidery money too, and I shall be all right—though very, very miserable. The idea of what I would do came into my head while I was talking with Freddie—and since I came into this room, I have made up my mind. I'm sorry I can't set you free altogether. There's Carrie to think of, and I must live for her sake. But at any rate you won't have to look after me, or to feel that I'm disgracing you with the smart people who have taken you up—

"Don't look for us, for you will never, never find us.

"Good-bye, John. Do you remember that night in the Ghyll, and all the things we said?

"I've spoiled your sketch—I couldn't help it—and I'm not sorry—not yet, anyway. She has everything in the world, and I had nothing—but you. Why did you leave the lamps?—just to mock at me?

"Good-bye. I have left my wedding-ring on this paper. You'll know I couldn't do that, if I ever meant to come back!"

She rose, and moved a small table in front of the ruined picture. On it she placed, first, the parcel she had brought with her, which contained papers and small personal possessions belonging to her husband; in front of the packet she laid the five letters of Madame de Pastourelles, her own letter in an envelope addressed to him, and upon it her ring.

Then she put on her hat and veil, tying the veil closely round her face, and, with one last look round the room, she crept to the door and unlocked it. So quietly did she descend the stairs that Mrs. Gibbs, who was listening

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sharply, with the kitchen door open, for any sound of her departure, heard nothing. The outer door opened and shut without the smallest noise, and the slender, veiled figure was quickly lost in the darkness and the traffic of the street.



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